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MADAME ROLAND

*BY THE SAME AUTHOR*

SECRET SOCIETIES AND THE FRENCH  
REVOLUTION

ANNA VAN SCHURMAN: ARTIST,  
SCHOLAR, SAINT

MAXIMS OF A QUEEN

ETC. ETC.







"The least unfaithful of my likenesses"

*Frontispiece]*

# MADAME ROLAND

A STUDY IN REVOLUTION

BY

MRS. POPE-HENNESSY

(UNA BIRCH)



London

NISBET & CO. LIMITED

22 BERNERS STREET, W



“LES grandes âmes sont trop simples pour  
être modestes.”

COMTESSE DIANE,  
*Glans de la Vie.*

*First Published in 1917*

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## INTRODUCTION

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**T**IME passes quickly in the pages of a biography, so quickly that we lose sense of its reality. The long and chequered years of another person's life are distilled with horrid and unnatural ease into an hour of our leisure. Sometimes, after looking at a book of the kind, we become restive and begin to question whether life can be reduced to such desiccated terms, can be analysed and labelled for putting away on a bookshelf. Inevitably we are reminded of the brown ghosts of dead flowers stuck into the albums of childish days. Just as the press and the blotting-paper preserved for us those wraiths of beauty divorced from colour and fragrance, so do words too often preserve the forms of men and women while separating from them the mysterious expression of real life, that we call personality. Yet the analogy is incomplete, for the press and the blotting-paper have neither love nor understanding, and the biographer should have both, lest he transform a great person into a passionless marionette. Individual life at its best is a profound and passionate business, and the work of the biographer should also be a profound and passionate business, but for the most part it is nothing of the kind, and is a mere refuge for the

manufacturer of books. Perhaps it is that the academic conditions under which they see the lives of the dead stretched like a map before them turn biographers into judges, critics and assessors when they should be lovers, friends, enemies. Perhaps it is the artificiality of their work that destroys in them the sense of human life and human relationship, even as the making of a map turns the eye of the topographer away from soft contours, hedges, coloured crops, atmosphere and changing lights to focus it upon such facts as the difference of level and the direction of roads and rivers. We do not know, but we do know that if life itself does not pulse through the pages of a biography we are vaguely disappointed, for we feel that there is a great deal to be learnt from intimacy with unusual persons of another generation and country. We nearly all are born with a natural curiosity as to the working of the minds of notable men, arising perhaps out of a deep though often unformulated conviction that personality is for us the most direct vehicle of truth and knowledge, and so we continue to read biographies and never tire of asking by what star a great man steered his course, with what serenity he faced destiny. We have, after all, so much in common with every man, whether he be celebrated or unknown, for are we not all mortal, are we not all needing explanation, have we not all to find out how to live ?

Life often seems no more than a preparation for something which never happens, and we count those fortunate to whom the moment of fulfilment comes. The professional soldier and sailor spend

their best years in training themselves for work which they may never be called upon to do, and it is debatable whether it requires more constancy and faith to learn to kill well, or die well collectively, than it does to learn how to act or speak resolutely, unsupported and alone, should the time ever come for us to do so.

Sometimes there seems to be nothing in life at all save the putting out of effort in some way or other, and we have to hold firmly to the belief that to act with enthusiasm and faith is the one condition of acting greatly. Life, as far as we know it, is action, is passion, and if a man does not share in the action or the passion of his time, he runs the peril of being judged not to have lived at all. The woman about whom this book has been written is distinguished by a determination to share in the passion of her day. She believed in the unexplainable worth and sure issue of effort, and she stood steadily on her course of unfaltering preparation for that public and political life to which she believed against all evidence that she might one day be called. For this people have called Madame Roland a prig, as if by slinging an idle epithet all interest in her could be for ever stilled. It does not matter what they call her, the fact remains that her life, priggish or no, unsympathetic or no, was a life of purpose and direction. She was not particularly witty or humorous,—people of purpose seldom are,—but she had a fund of gaiety and good temper which endeared her to a great many of her contemporaries. There was no insipidity about her, she led her own life absolutely, wherever she was stationed,

and in spite of her adoration for all things Greek and Roman she did not believe the sum of greatness to be buried in the past, but discovered prophets, saints, heroes and patriots among the people of her day. She believed in the ascent of humanity, in the possibility of ideal social relations and readjustments, and to the furthering of these ideas she gave the best that was in her. No matter that in the end she tasted the bitterness of failure, no matter that she knew disappointment, she lived her life to the uttermost and died with undimmed courage.

The past to those who lived in it was as the present is to us, an all-enveloping now, and a biography should at any rate convey something of the actuality of living. We should be made to feel something of the years that held no vista of new chances, something of the joys and sorrows, something of what went to the slow building up of character, something of the temper of mind which faced monotony or illness, something in short, of all the preparation that went to the splendid action, the heroic leading, the good end.

When the concreteness of life goes, as it does go in death, when the personality has evaporated, when the clothes and the possessions are scattered, real memory seems somehow to go with them, and nothing survives save a remarkable phrase, a book, an attitude. It is the biographer's hard task to bring the scattered fragments together and re-animate them with their proper life. If he fails in his endeavour, his book should be thrown upon the vast rubbish-heap of unrealised ambitions.

U. P.-H.



# MADAME ROLAND

## CHAPTER I

### EARLY YEARS

“Une jeune fille en sait assez quand elle sait le nom des grands hommes anciens et modernes, qu'elle ne fricasse pas Annibal avec César, qu'elle ne prend pas le Traximène pour un général et Pharsale pour une dame Romaine . . . veux-tu donc devenir une savante ? Fi ! . . . Fi !”—*Correspondance de Balzac.*

“**T**HEY called me Manon : I am sorry for those who love romance, for the name is not noble ; it does not suit a heroine on the grand scale, but still it is my name, and I am writing history,” wrote Madame Roland in gaol as she began to compose her celebrated *Mémoires*. Such a poor, inexpressive tag of a name, she felt, could never be an index of character, but it pleased her to think that “every one would be reconciled to it if they could but see the bearer thereof.” Neither at the end of her life nor at its beginning did Madame Roland hold a lowly opinion of herself ; it is just as well to realise this at once, for else we find ourselves continually knocking up against her self-esteem with a kind of disapproval. This self-esteem was one of the fundamental qualities of her nature, and it endowed her with a buoyancy that enabled her to float unscathed over troubled

seas. Independence of mind and indifference to criticism are not popular traits in any woman, and it is small wonder that so many people cherish established prejudices about Madame Roland and dub her unsympathetic, pretentious, absurd or middle-class. She certainly came of middle-class stock, and possibly indifference to opinion made her unsympathetic, but it is improbable so hard-working a farmer, so practical a housekeeper, so conscientious and devoted a mother could really have been essentially pretentious or absurd. She put a great deal of practical work into her short life, and spent its leisure in training her character and educating her mind so as to be ready for public service when it came her way. Madame Roland was a woman of very great ability, but not a woman of genius. Anything she tried to do she did well, but no one could call her inspired although she was an incorrigible idealist. Her life was lived during one of the supreme moments of history, and owing to the tragic setting of its last months all the years that went to the building up of her character and the forming of her mind are apt to be forgotten. Violent death has a way of throwing the rest of a career out of focus and making it seem puny and trivial. Madame Roland has suffered more than most people by her fine manner of dying. Every one knows about it even though they know nothing about the woman herself, and yet the woman herself is a great deal more interesting than her death ; in fact, her death is hardly interesting except in so far as it was of a piece with her life. Madame Roland's character was a compact edifice of virtues and follies in

which humility found no place; and being an honest, fearless woman, converted by Rousseau to an extreme frankness of confession, she has no hesitation in telling us not only the discreditable things which we conceal about ourselves, but also those good things which it is equally difficult for most people to express. Count Beugnot, a fellow-prisoner with her in the last days at the Conciergerie, said "self-love was her dominating characteristic," but he must have been wrong in this, for the keynote of her life was just a very great interest in herself, an interest as far removed from conceit as from humility. She was always "an extraordinary person in her own eyes," and in extreme youth she wrote to her school friend, Sophie Cannet: "Even in your eyes I may be a very curious problem to resolve!"

To Madame Roland half the value of life lay in self-consciousness, in watching the development of her own character and the strange motions of her own soul as it responded to the stimulus of life within and without. Many people pass through an introspective phase in youth; few keep up their interest in themselves in middle life. Madame Roland's interest in herself never flagged, she was always on the alert to discover the purpose of her destiny.

Like Rousseau, and most of the eminent Girondins, she came of a family of tradesmen. Her father, Gatien Phlipon, was a master-engraver and enameller, living in Paris, a pleasant ordinary man of no particular talent. He was well known in his way, for Greuze and other artists used to drop into his workshop from time to time for a talk, and

collectors consulted him about engravings. Her mother, the daughter of a wine merchant, devoted her life to bringing children into the world. There were seven Philipon babies, and out of these seven only one lived.<sup>1</sup> The one who survived birth was hurriedly sent out to nurse in the country and at the age of two was returned to its parents, who lived in a second-floor flat on the Quai de l'Horloge du Palais.<sup>2</sup> We none of us may divine the future, and Manon's parents did not dream that a century later a tablet would be affixed to the wall of their house in memory of the little child whom they were welcoming home.

The windows of the second-floor flat overlooked one of the most entertaining places in Paris—the Pont Neuf. Facing the house stood the statue of King Henry iv., and round it clustered the orange and lemon vendors. Little pyramids of golden fruit brightened the greyness of the cobblestones and balustrades, and the statue itself was the rendezvous of the town. It was always said that if you wanted to see who was in Paris you walked for an hour on the Pont Neuf.

A child could find great amusement in looking out of the window and watching the horsemen, the footmen, the equipages, the street hawkers, the recruiting sergeants, but this amusement was eclipsed for Manon when she learnt at four years old to read. That indeed was an entry into a new world. From that moment to the end of her existence she never ceased “to devour

<sup>1</sup> Marie-Jeanne, born 18th March 1754.

<sup>2</sup> M. Perroud contends that the apartment was not at the angle of the quay and the Pont Neuf, but at the opposite angle, at the corner of the rue de Harlay (*Rév. Fr.*, April 1909).

books as the true bread of life." The only way to tempt the child away from her reading was to give her flowers. Writing in later years of this strong feeling for flowers, she says that they gave her "a quite inexpressible sense of life and well-being," "a sensible satisfaction." With flowers and books her life began, with flowers and books it closed. In the fetid atmosphere of Sainte Pélagie, the cell in which she wrote her *Mémoires* was scented with fresh flowers; the gaoler called it the *Pavillon de Flore*. On a table in that retreat lay volumes of Tacitus and Thomson, well thumbed and greatly prized. Some things go with us all the way. Some joys no man can take from us, and there is a kind of consecration in the very fact of loving books and flowers, a joyful and gentle detachment from gross and sordid interests which no circumstances can defile or spoil.

It is no use writing or talking about childhood, no amount of writing or talking can give one just that clear-cut impression of the world that we all get as we slowly include one thing after another in the circle of our consciousness. Manon's childish world was enlivened by the occasional visit to the flat of a friend of her father's, an "architect-painter." She used to stand in front of him, resting her elbows on his knees, and looking up into his grotesque face while he asked her questions about her lessons, and in return he would tell her stories of an old man called Tangu, whose nose was so long that he had to wind it round his arm before he could walk.

Besides this amusing person there were her father and mother and the shadowy forms of the



apprentices in the workshop to be studied. Then there were two grandmothers to propitiate, one of whom, Madame Phlipon, was a kindly, laughing body, and the other, Madame Bimont, being in her second childhood, did things no child could understand; and then there was dear little Uncle Bimont, dressed as a priest, who jumped her down from chairs and made very funny jokes.

As she sat in gaol probing the sources of her Stoic temperament Madame Roland recalled an episode of childhood in which it seemed to her that much latent character was indicated. For having refused to take some medicine handed her by her mother, she had been whipped by her father and ordered to take the potion. By way of answer she jumped out of bed, stood with her face to the wall and lifted her little chemise to await further blows. Madame Roland says that her sensation of this episode was still so vivid "that it would cost me now no more courage to go proudly to the scaffold than it then required to resolve to be beaten, perhaps beaten to death."

At seven years old Madame Phlipon took the child to learn her catechism in Uncle Bimont's class in the parish church of St. Barthélemy. All institutions seemed to be threatened in 1793, none more so than the Catholic Church, and there is a very curious touch in the *Mémoires* which shows how moribund it seemed to Madame Roland during the last weeks of her life: "At the pace things are going now it is possible that some reading this passage about the Catechism will say, What does this mean? I will explain it to them." This she proceeds to do, and then recounts almost



with the naïveté of childhood with what dreadful ease she carried off the annual prize for religious instruction, and how one day the vicar of the parish descended on the class and asked the children a few catch questions. He inquired of Manon in particular how many spirits there were in the celestial hierarchy. She smiled, and passed in review before him Angels, Archangels, Thrones, Dominations, Powers. The vicar was quite delighted with this answer, and Manon was regarded by an admiring audience of parents as “a little predestinate.”

Madame Phlipon was far too gentle to rule her child or any one else, and allowed life to flow by her without attempting to control it. She exercised no authority in the house, and Manon was allowed to do exactly as she pleased. Most mornings, like her little contemporary Brissot at Chartres, the child slipped out of bed at five, put on a coat and crept to the writing-table in the corner of her mother's bedroom, and worked away at copying or learning by heart. To give the Phlipons their due they spared no pains or money in educating their only child. A series of tutors taught her history, caligraphy, geography, others instructed her in the arts of dancing, singing and playing the viol and guitar. Uncle Bimont taught her the Latin of the Psalms and Vulgate, but he was a lazy teacher and took no interest in her work.

Most children educate themselves a good deal, and Manon's private reading did as much for her as her tutors. She says: “The Bible, which in those old translations presented things as crudely as doctors, initiated me into the secrets of life,

and some of its naïve phrases remained always in my mind." Indeed, she knew so much about life at eight years old that it made her laugh when her grandmother told her that little children were found under cabbage leaves in gardens, and looking up into the old lady's face she said, "My Ave Maria tells me they come from quite another place."

The days seemed very short; there was never enough time to do everything. Reading alone took up hours of every day. The home library consisted of the *Lives of the Saints*, the *Civil Wars* by Appian, a *Turkish Theatre*, the *Roman Comique* by Scarron, and the *Mémoires of Madame de Montpensier*. As Madame Roland called up the names of those old and well-remembered books she wrote with a little sigh: "I still can see their shape, their stains, their contents." . . . "I had a rage for learning."

Dacier's translation of Plutarch, in which she found enormous pleasure, was discovered by her as by Rousseau at nine years old; it seemed to her "exactly the food she wanted," and during Lent of 1763 she always took it to church with her. From this moment she dates the impressions and ideas that made her unconsciously a republican.<sup>1</sup> The celebrated "Lives" were

<sup>1</sup> Rousseau read and re-read Plutarch. "From these interesting readings, from the discussions they entailed between my father and myself, was formed that liberal and republican spirit, this proud, indomitable character, impatient of yoke and servitude, which has tormented me the whole of my life in circumstances the least calculated to give it play. Endlessly occupied with Rome and Athens, living so to speak with their great men, myself born the citizen of a republic, and son of a father with whom love of country was the strongest passion, I became after his example on fire. I believed myself to be Greek or Roman, I became the person whose life I was reading" (*Confessions*, ch. i. p. 10).

succeeded by *Télémaque* and *Jerusalem Delivered*. "Tender Fénélon moved my heart, Tasso kindled my imagination."

Visitors were sometimes shocked at the child's precocity and sometimes tried to interfere with her casual upbringing. For example, her mother one day was playing picquet with a friend while Manon read quietly in the corner of the room. When the game was over, the lady beckoned the child to her and asked to be shown the book she was reading: it happened to be *Candide*. To Madame Phlipon she expressed the greatest astonishment at finding any child with such a book. "Without answering her, my mother told me quite simply to put the book back in the place from which I had taken it." Manon obeyed, but was not at all pleased with the fat lady's interference in her pleasures, and is careful to tell us that she "never smiled at Madame Charbonné again." Madame Phlipon did not change her ways because of this incident, but continued to let the child read anything she pleased. M. Phlipon used to give his daughter such books as Fénélon's *Treatise on the Education of Girls* and Locke's *Education of Children*. Everything served Manon's purpose, since she was consciously trying to form herself in accordance with the conviction that she had a destiny to fulfil. "My education fitted me for life. I knew how to make soup as joyfully as Philopœmen cut wood. . . . I am nowhere out of place," wrote Madame Roland from the prostitutes' prison of Sainte Pélagie, in the last months of her life.

The only pleasure Madame Phlipon got out of

her girl was in dressing her up in silk gowns on Sundays. Young people in those days wore *corps-de-robes* which consisted of a tight boned bodice, full skirt and a train ornamented with chiffon.

“My toilette made me cry—‘hair in curl papers, then hot irons’; it was ‘a barbarous and ridiculous get-up,’ but though my tender head made me cry I did not complain when I had a great coiffure erected on it. Some who read this book may wonder for whom were these toilets in my retired life. Those who ask must remember that I went out twice a week and that the richer *bourgeoisie* of Paris spent a good deal of money on dressing themselves to promenade in the Tuileries Garden on Sundays. Then there was church, and the great pleasure of walking slowly through one’s *quartier* on Sunday under the windows of one’s neighbours, and then of course there were the family *fêtes*, New Year’s Day, a wedding, or a baptism.”

Presently religion began to fill her mental horizon with strange clouds and lights. “My retired life began to seem to me too worldly a medium in which to prepare for my first Communion. I took a fancy to the Divine Office. I read explanations of the ceremonies of the Church eagerly. I was thrilled by their mystic meaning. Up till this time the idea of leaving my mother made me shed torrents of tears. What, however, should one not sacrifice to the Lord? I had pictured to myself the cloister, silent and romantic, and the more august it seemed to me, the more suited would it be to my melting soul.” One evening after supper the child threw herself on her knees before father and mother, sobbing, “I want to beg you to do a thing which tears me to pieces, but which my conscience demands; put me in a



convent." They asked her reasons. She said she wished to make her first Communion with suitable recollection. "My father approved of my wish, my grandparents praised me," and so she had her way and was deposited one May day in 1765 at the Convent of the Congregation of Notre Dame in the rue Sainte Etienne du Mont.

Recalling without effort after an interval of more than twenty-five years the poignant emotion of childhood, Madame Roland, writing in her prison cell, says: "I went through the convent door choking down my tears, but rendering to God the greatest sacrifice I could make to Him." The garden of the convent was shaded by immense trees, and as she leant out of the window that first night and looked at the moon riding quietly in the sky, she felt as if God were "smiling on her sacrifice and was already offering her the recompense of consolatory peace."

It was not the custom in the eighteenth century for intelligent children to be frivolous. Rousseau tells us he spent all his spare time in reading and meditation, and with almost equal precocity Manon at the age of eleven describes her sensibility "to the beauty of the foliage, the breath of the zephyrs, the perfume of the plants." She "felt God everywhere," "saw His care," "was penetrated with gratitude," "adored Him in church," "almost swooned on hearing the organ and the young voices of nuns." "I used to walk along the silent cloister with very short steps, the better to taste the solitude. Sometimes I stopped by a tomb whereon the praise of a holy virgin was engraved. 'She is happy,' I said to myself,



and then a sort of sweet melancholy bathed me."

The Christianity of her girlhood must have seemed to Madame Roland in maturity a vague and somewhat foolish dream, something that she discarded when childish things were put away and she donned the mantle of philosopher and republican. Yet, in spite of the fact that her feelings had changed, she does convey to us in her *Mémoires* a lively sense of things once felt and lived. Though priests for her had become charlatans and Christian mysteries "absurdities" she was able to revive with fidelity those earlier emotional experiences. She could always remember anything she had felt.

"Things" sometimes caused her acute suffering, "things" which did not seem to enter into the feelings of others at all, which passed them by "as street traffic does." A peculiar quality is needed to fathom experiences as well as people, to see the inside of existence—to feel the fire—to touch life, in short. With all the aching intensity of a passionate woman Madame Roland could look back over twenty-five years and say, "If one may measure life by the feeling which marks all the time of its endurance, I have lived prodigiously."

The poignancy of her childish fervour for religion caused her to prepare very carefully by means of prayer, silences, meditations, for that first Communion which was to open the doors to her of "an inalienable happiness." "Plunged in tears," "ravished by celestial love," on the great day she had to be supported to the altar. The

dear nuns looked upon her as specially blessed, and recommended themselves to her prayers. One of them, Sœur Sainte Agathe, who was young and very lonely, made a great fuss over Manon, and in so doing incurred the displeasure of Mother Gertrude, aged eighty. This pretty young nun flits like a ghost in and out of the pages of the *Mémoires*. Her devotion to Manon was unchanging; not only was she able to befriend her during her engagement to Roland, but when the Revolution swept her and many other dedicated women out of their convents into secular life she proved her love and courage, and defied the law of "suspects," by going to see her *filie* in the prison of Sainte Pélagie.

Soon after Manon had settled down in the convent two new pupils called Cannet arrived from Amiens. Manon promptly struck up a friendship with the younger one, and they proceeded according to their own ideas "to help each other along the road to perfection." This friendship became such a feature in Manon's life and resulted in such an outpouring of letters that we must dwell on this apparently unimportant school-girl attachment for a moment. The so-called Cannet Correspondence fills two closely printed volumes and covers the years 1767-80 of Manon's girlhood. These letters make it easy for any one to trace the psychological development of the girl into the woman, and it is through them that we get the full and actual savour of adolescent experience which in the *Mémoires* is occasionally blurred or enhanced by the haze of time.

After spending a very happy and profitable

year at the convent Manon was sent, owing to sickness in her own home, to stay with Grandmamma Phlipon on the Ile S. Louis.

The child's new quarters proved to be exceedingly pleasant. Grandmamma Phlipon was so gay and fat and vivacious that no one could help loving her. At one time she had earned a living by educating the son and daughter of a Madame de Boismorel, but now she was living in considerable comfort with her devoted sister Mademoiselle Angélique Rôtisset, an asthmatic, devout old maid. Tante Angélique, as Manon called this lady, had a white face, a hooked nose with spectacles riding on it and a nut-cracker chin. She was very glad to have a child in the house, and laid aside her eternal knitting in order to take Manon out on the long summer evenings. They used to wander beside the river, that wonder of flowing grace, with its "agreeable quays," its trees and the vision of the country not so far away. "Child of the Seine," that is what Manon called herself in prison, and how often she must have longed in the hot summer of 1793, in which she had to dispense with all cleanliness and comfort, for a dip into that same stream. The fascination of water flowing on and on—through the country—a ribbon of light and life—energised her childish imagination to long flights by fields and towns unknown. The joy of those journeys dreamed by the moving tide is known to many, and just as Heine enjoyed his vision of "prudent elephants pacing banana groves" in the India which he had never seen, so did she enjoy those wanderings and visions of worlds that she might never know.

The glamour of the convent still lay across Manon's life; she still loved religious observances. "I went every morning to Mass—by the quays." It was a solitary walk, and there was nothing to break in on the zeal and recollection with which she threw herself down daily before the altar. "I cherished the secret intention of devoting myself to the religious life. S. François de Sales, one of the most lovable saints in Paradise, had vanquished me. I knew, however, that being an only child my parents would not allow me to make my vows before attaining my majority, so I was silent about this—also there was the chance of changing my mind."

Grandmamma Phlipon possessed a set of Madame de Sévigné's letters, and through them Manon made acquaintance with a whole gamut of new ideas and feelings. She tells us that they "fixed" her taste: "Madame de Sévigné's amiable facility, grace, enjoyment and tenderness made me intimate with her: I knew her society, I was as familiar with her surroundings as if I had lived with her." Many and many a time in later life when she had to entertain at the Hôtel de l'Intérieur did ideas come into her head of what this woman of the great world would have said or done under similar conditions. Reading these letters made Manon long to peep into something more interesting than the society of small tradesmen, so one day Grandmamma Phlipon took her grandchild to visit Madame de Boismorel, her former employer. Smart toilets were made, and they arrived at the great lady's hotel about midday. The servants welcomed them warmly,

and a lackey led the visitors to "the salon where Madame de Boismorel was sitting with her dog on a sofa, gravely working in tapestry." "How do you do, Mademoiselle Rôtisset?" she said. This form of address struck Manon as very odd, and was her first intimation of social inequality! "Really I'm very pleased to see you," she continued cordially; "and this pretty girl, is she your grandchild? Come here, my heart, and sit beside me." All this time Manon was edging away in horror from the rouged cheeks, bright eyes and hard voice of the fat little lady who called her grandmamma "Mademoiselle."

"You ought to have a lucky hand, my little friend. Have you ever drawn in a lottery?" "Never, Madame; I do not like games of chance." . . . "What a voice! sweet and full! But how grave she is! Are you not just a little pious?" "I know my duties, Madame, and I try to fulfil them." "Very good! I suppose you want to become a nun?" "I ignore my destiny; I do not at present seek to decide it." "How sententious! I suppose she reads, your grandchild, Mademoiselle Rôtisset?" "Reading is her greatest pleasure, Madame; she spends part of every day in reading." "Oh, I can see that; but take care she doesn't become a *savante*, for that would be a great pity!" How sententious indeed were poor little Manon's answers, but she was soon left in peace to listen to a dialogue between the two old ladies, about their health and other minor matters. It was all a blur to the child—but she carried one strange little tale away in her head, the story of a lady who always went about *decolletée*



except when she was getting in or out of a carriage, when she covered her chest with a big handkerchief, "as it was not made for exhibiting to footmen." Manon made a resolution to ask her grandmother for more information on the lives of these strange well-to-do persons. After a time the visit ended, and Madame de Boismorel rang the bell and ordered her servant to go in two days to Mademoiselle Rôtisset's house and fetch a lottery ticket which was meanwhile to be drawn by her grandchild.

On the way home Grandmamma Phlipon told Manon all sorts of things about this old lady—how egoistic she was, how free and easy in her ways, how she received her confessor and other visitors while dressing and did not mind putting on her chemise in front of them. The little girl thought these sort of tales very shocking and was pained to know that people behaved so immodestly.

One day Manon's parents decided to have her back. Life at Grandmamma Phlipon's had been so gay that home seemed extremely dull by contrast, more especially as her mother went out very little and was plunged in a gentle and constant melancholy. Since the home flat had only three rooms in it the Phlipons had constructed *un petit réduit* for their daughter in the corner of the salon. The *réduit* included a window on to the Seine, and was so small that Manon had to get up on her bed to look out of it, but once this climb was accomplished her friend the river proved "a great companion in meditation." Looking out over the Quai de l'Horloge du Palais, her "vagabond romantic spirit" could wander in "the vast deserts of the sky" to the blue area of the sunrise

and the west gilt and incarnadined beyond the trees. Tears gently flowed down her cheeks when the vision was too beautiful to face, when her heart swelled at the grandeur and exquisite painting of the sunset sky, when her being breathed in God, and felt itself at one with nature and life. She describes the skies, the lights, the tufted trees, the houses of Chaillot, the glorious architecture of the Louvre, and all the thoughts and emotions that flitted through her head.

Many and many a summer's evening was spent dreaming at that window. Many and many an hour was spent watching the changing colours of the evening sky, in experiencing the emotion that comes when all the scarlet and the gold—the trappings of the sun—faded and she was left alone within the azure night unlit as yet by stars. With a yearning beyond expression Manon's whole being went out to the Infinite.

Manon could not tell people why it was that it was good to look with unseeing eyes over the roofs to the sunset, and down the glades at Meudon, or even at the last above the crowds to the sky. And we may believe she was in this state of divine emotion when she died, that it was to her so little a personal thing in the end that she did not consider the bloody knife or the last indignity, but her mind, carrying her from the things of sense, dwelt only on the vision, the dream of God that she had worshipped in the pure ideal of liberty.

All the days of Manon's life were filled with lessons, dreams and books, and during the long evenings Madame Phlipon read history aloud to

the daughter who would not waste her precious time in anything so trivial as backgammon or piquet. In order to benefit to the full from this reading Manon used the first thing in the morning to write down what had particularly struck her the night before. "This became a habit and finally a passion." On Sundays and holy-days Madame Phlipon and her girl were in the habit of spending the evening with Uncle Bimont and his vicar. The elders played backgammon while Manon looked at books and read anything that came to hand—Voltaire, Bossuet, Don Quixote, Descartes, and the Lives of the Desert Fathers.

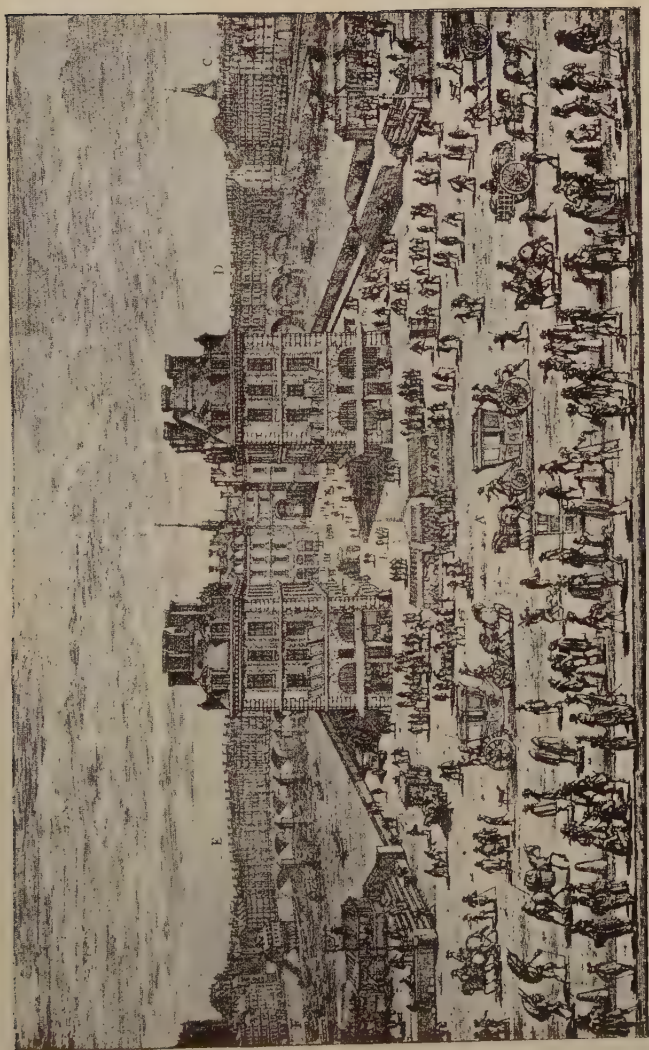
Through an indulgent father she triumphantly acquired the works of Diodorus of Sicily, Pascal, Locke, Berelamacqui—books which would make the modern game-playing child stagger with fear and amazement. Not that M. Phlipon approved of such assiduous study. He worked with his hands and, finding happiness in so doing, he wished his daughter to do the same, but though he taught her to draw and engrave,<sup>1</sup> nothing would induce her to abandon her books. Money was no lure, as she always preferred "reading a book to buying a ribbon." The spending of so many hours alone in reading, writing and meditating gave Manon the opportunity of doing the one thing that seemed to her really important, namely, to know herself, to bring every thought, word, feeling into line, or, as she called it, "into the unity of the personal me." Religion gradually became for her a matter for investigation. In reading history she had

<sup>1</sup> There is a signet ring at Château de la Rosière engraved by Madame Roland as a girl in her father's workshop. She used it for years.

viewed "the succession of centuries, the march of empires, the public virtues and errors of whole nations," and it struck her that "the idea of a Creator who could deliver to eternal torture was mean, ridiculous, atrocious." "From the moment a Catholic begins to reason," reflects Madame Roland, "the Church may look upon him as lost. I understand perfectly why priests demand blind submission, and so ardently extol a religious faith which accepts without examination and adores without murmuring: it is the basis of their empire; it is destroyed by reasoning." Then, contriving to put herself back at the angle of adolescent investigation, she says: "No one will ever be able to express my anxiety of spirit, my activity of mind. Critical works of philosophers, moralists and metaphysicians became my favourite reading. Comparing and analysing them occupied me to the exclusion of everything else."

Any one who has ever attempted to restate and resolve these problems for himself in youth must remember how absorbing, how intense is the application we shower upon them. How can we take interest in parties, clothes, novels, coronations, games when we have not yet settled whether God exists, what is the purpose of life, what we are in ourselves? We must not judge Manon with grown-up, indifferent minds; after all, for most of us maturity spells indifference. Much of her mental life represents a phase through which all thinking persons pass more or less quickly, and in which some behave as she behaved, retaining the semblance of religion as a sort of guide-rope when leaning out into the infinite inane.





THE PONT NEUF

The large house on the right is that in which Manon Philipon was brought up





Almost the only mind with which a girl like Manon could try conclusions was that of a priest, and she took full advantage of the opportunity offered by confession to discuss every sort of problem. When the vicar of St. Barthélemy died she chose austere Abbé Morel as her confessor. He hurriedly gave his new penitent the great defensive books on the Church. Manon read and often annotated them, and was immensely flattered by finding out that Abbé Morel could hardly believe that she alone was author of the comments. Encouraged by this tacit admission of ability she set forth with renewed vigour on the trail of further destructive criticism, and the poor Abbé fell an easy victim to her ingenuity. Not only did she assure him that she was practically a sceptic, but she also told him that she felt "convicted of sin." After reading tales of St. Bernard throwing himself into the snow and of other saints walking in prickly bushes to quell the lusts of the flesh, she managed to persuade herself that she felt luxurious thoughts and feelings welling up within her, and so literally "put ashes on her head after watering them with tears." It diverted Madame Roland immensely in gaol to recall these "piquant and innocent singularities," and to remember how difficult confession suddenly became. What could she say to the confessor on so delicate a subject? It worried her dreadfully, but she managed to hit on a sentence that met the case: "*Je m'accuse d'avoir eu des mouvements contraires à la chasteté chrétienne.*" This sentence appealed to her particularly whimsical sense of humour, and she

added, "Santeuil could not have been more pleased to find his rhyme, nor Archimedes the solution of his problem." "I trembled as I knelt in the holy tribunal; I was veiled to the chin." Immensely curious was this minx on the threshold of life to know what the sequel to her confession would be. Abbé Morel, however, was not to be drawn, and merely asked her whether she had nourished bad thoughts or read bad books, and when she said "Never," he quietly passed to the order of the day. But Madame Roland adds: "In his final exhortation he recommended me to watch over myself very carefully, and to remember that angelic purity was the virtue most agreeable to the Saviour, and other commonplaces such as I read every day."

After a while she felt that she had exhausted the possibilities of religion and turned to philosophy. In books, Manon Phlipon, like many other people, lived a sort of anticipatory life, identifying herself, as we all do, with the most admirable or interesting characters in them. She ploughed through the aridities of Descartes, Malesbranche and Helvetius with praiseworthy assiduity, and always came back to the question, What is true? Having convinced herself that the source of human virtue is independent of all religious systems and that there is an innate goodness in man, she felt she could from this platform of certainty, and to us lesser folk it seems rather a large undertaking, "investigate the errors in the belief of nations and of social institutions." The beautiful idea of a God Creator, whose providence watches over the world, the spirituality of the

soul and its immortality, she felt might be illusions; but as none of these things can be demonstrated, she gave up all idea of treating them as mathematical propositions. To epitomise her lengthy periods, "in discussion she would agree with the atheist," but in the country her heart lifted itself up by no wish of hers to the unknown God. She abandoned, however, none of her old practices, and conformed to the Established Church "because her age, her sex, her situation made it a duty." "Incapable of deceit, I told Abbé Morel I came to confession to edify my neighbour and to save annoying my mother, but I really didn't know of what to accuse myself; my conscience reproached me with nothing, though it is no merit to act well." Abbé Morel, who no doubt was a little tired of his penitent, gave up the task of trying to keep her *croyante*, and made the best of finding her rational; he exhorted her to beware of pride, and seemed quite pleased if she went "to the Holy Table two or three times a year out of philosophic tolerance, as it could not be called the operation of faith." With the pride of the newly born rationalist she tells us with a smug and intolerable air of patronage: "I went to take the divine food, remembering what Cicero had said, 'qu'après toutes les folies des hommes à l'égard de la divinité il ne leur restait plus qu'à la transformer en aliment pour la manger.'"

By degrees active doubt and investigation died down, and we find her falling back on a purely sentimental and æsthetic attachment to religion. Sprinkled up and down the letters are many allusions to her state of mind. "I have just come

back from High Mass. I lose as little as possible of the service on this day for its sad beauty intoxicates me." And again: "I have prayed God so hard that I feel more tranquil and more gay." "Sometimes I laugh with 'le bon Dieu' at the things I do out of complaisance to Him. . . ." She wrote to Sophie, who was shocked at such levity: "I shall postpone my jubilee till after Easter—till the summer. I must have time to do the Stations, but I should never have the courage to repeat five Paternosters and five Ave Marias in four different churches in a fortnight. The Paternoster is a very fine prayer, but I like thinking of the ideas it gives me and not to count and mumble it on a rosary."

And in the shadowy background of home Madame Phlipon sat, enduring conversations and readings that were not too carefully adapted to the prejudices of another generation. Every day she prayed that her wayward girl's faith might be restored to her in all its early fervour.



## CHAPTER II

### HOME LIFE AND SUITORS

“ Pourquoi préfère-t-on pour sa fille un sot qui a un nom et un état à un homme d’esprit ? C’est que les avantages du sot se partagent et que ceux de l’esprit sont incommunicables : un duc fait une duchesse : un homme d’esprit ne fait pas une femme d’esprit ! ”—ANTOINE DE RIVAROL.

MANON’S letters to Sophie Cannel give us every opportunity of watching the development of the girl into the woman. Indeed there are very few years of adolescence so well documented as those of Manon Phlipon. By means of these letters we are able to assist in life as it was lived day by day in the flat on the Quai de l’Horloge, to keep touch with the books read and the subjects studied in *le petit réduit*, to take part in the holiday excursions to Meudon and Fontenay, to see court life at Versailles through the eyes of a little *bourgeoise* and, above all, to understand the thoughts that passed through Manon’s head and the sediment of opinions that they left behind.

M. Phlipon, who was pleased to find that his blue-stockings daughter was turning into a very pretty girl, with a good figure, brown hair, grey eyes and a lovely complexion, used proudly to take her on his arm for walks in the Luxembourg, Tuileries and Arsenal Gardens, and was frankly delighted at the compliments and notice that she attracted. The only places in Paris in which

it was possible for young men to see and become acquainted with respectable young women were in church, at dances and, best of all, in the public gardens. As a rule, the young *bourgeoise* of that time was by no means anxious to marry. For her, marriage meant endless duties and no rights; it shut the door upon the world of amusement and pleasure and left her to a continuous round of domestic employments; yet since marriage was the only career open to her, it had to be faced some time, so the great thing to Manon and her contemporaries was to postpone it as long as possible.

On finding how vastly she was admired and how many men turned their heads to look at her, conscientious Manon began to worry. She really could not allow herself to be diverted from her purpose of preparing for a great future by a little flattery, and for Sophie's benefit she analysed her point of view.

"Is it to shine like the flowers in a parterre or to receive empty praise that persons of my sex conform themselves to virtue and acquire talent? What does this extreme desire to please mean? . . . Do the curious stares and softly murmured compliments of a crowd of people I don't know matter? . . . Am I in the world to spend my existence in frivolity and tumultuous sentiment? Without doubt I have a nobler destiny. The very admiration which inflames me for all that is beautiful, wise, great and generous teaches me what I am called on to practise. The sublime and enchanting duties of wife and mother will one day be mine, and so my young years must be employed in trying to render myself capable of fulfilling them. I must study their importance, and in regulating my own inclinations I shall learn how one day to direct those of my children."

Some of these grandiose sentiments were cherished for many years. For example, when M. Roland during his courtship inquired whether she liked jewels, she answered emphatically, "I despise and detest them, since one day I hope to have some similar to those of which Cornelia made her adornment." Frivolity was abhorrent to her, and, as she said to Sophie, "It is not for *me* to play with dreams of lovers or impossible happiness!"

On Saturday evenings in summer M. Phlipon used to ask his girl to choose a Sunday excursion. It was the custom for Parisians to spend that day in the country. Big tarred barges, heavily laden with holiday-makers, as well as numbers of smaller boats, made their way down river to Saint Cloud, and such people as could not find places in the boats travelled by road in wagons full of wooden chairs. Phlipon had a weakness for Saint Cloud, where many of his friends went and where one could listen to music and watch the fountains playing; but his austere little daughter never would indulge so frivolous a taste if she could help it, and carried him off to unpopulated Meudon, "a favourite promenade suited to meditation." She preferred its wild woods, its solitary ponds, its avenues of pines, its high trees to the uninteresting thickets of the Bois de Boulogne or the well-raked alleys of Saint Cloud.

On Sunday mornings three figures might have been seen walking from the Quai de l'Horloge to the Pont Royal, where they hired a boat and "swiftly and silently were rowed to Bellevue," from whence they wandered on to Meudon. Some-

times a volume of Corneille, sometimes "poems by the great Rousseau," were taken by Manon to be read in the most quiet places, and were enjoyed with unctuous recollection. In prison, Madame Roland recalled the exact localities in those woods where she picked ferns and purple orchis. Nothing is ever quite so extraordinary again in life as the places where we found wild flowers as children—no flowers are ever again so strangely beautiful. Sometimes she saw a deer darting lightly through the green shadows, sometimes the song of birds made music in that terrestrial paradise. Even though we are not imprisoned between stone walls but in the fortress of individualised life we sometimes shed tears like Madame Roland for the poignant little joys we may never know again.

Manon's parents were considerate enough to spend part of the day asleep in the shade, and the time they employed in this way was most precious to the girl, who then could abandon herself without fear of observation to those transports which are in very truth the privilege of adolescence. "I contemplated the majesty of the silent woods, I admired nature, I adored that Providence of which I felt the benefits." The language appears stilted to us of a later day; but who is there who does not know how Manon felt, though her words are not our words—who does not know that feeling of isolated emotion at the touch of Nature, Nature which in some moods seems to be the very garment of God? Of course Sophie was told of these delightful holidays, of these pure and exalted experiences and the sensibility that weighed her

friend down. "Like some temperaments which destroy themselves through their own activity, my heart lacerates itself with its own tenderness, and is miserable if it cannot love some one without reserve and without fear."

Her desire to love found its fulfilment for the time being in Sophie Cannet, and all Manon's life revolved round this schoolgirl attachment. No one else understood her or cared very much to know what she thought or felt. Her father and mother treated her as an ordinary girl, while all the while she was certain that she was an extraordinary girl, destined to play an uncommon part in affairs. Always she had the conviction strong upon her that she must not waste time, that she must prepare for the future.

Sophie's letters were a great feature in her life. She received them with excited tenderness. It often happened that she cried when reading them. One afternoon, for example, the Philipons were at dinner, and Manon was carelessly helping herself to food, when suddenly she saw that a letter from Amiens had come. Seizing it, she cried out, "Sophie! Sophie!" The rest of the family party looked at her in astonishment. She asked their leave to read it, and then immediately became absorbed, and shed tears on its closely written pages.

Grandmamma Philipon smiled in a disapproving way, and said, "If you had a husband and children this friendship would soon disappear and you would forget Mademoiselle Cannet." Manon could only feel that her poor grandmother knew nothing of the reality of friendship. A cousin



who happened to be present lay back in his chair and roared with laughter; and M. Phlipon said, "This sort of thing often occurs when letters from Amiens arrive!" Poor Manon was teased and chaffed on all sides, and in describing "the brutal scene" to Sophie, she said it surprised her to see so many people looking on friendship as a frivolous sentiment. "They look upon it as a *pis aller* for an unoccupied heart." And then, with no prevision of what changes life would bring, she continued: "Do you believe, Sophie, that a new situation would break our liaison? Even when we are introduced into the realms of love and marriage, do you think that we can forget those to whom we owe the most beautiful of our earlier years? . . . Merely being a wife and mother will not make us incapable of friendship; you feel as I do, Sophie; my heart answers for yours."

Occasionally Manon showed Sophie's letters to her mother, or, more commonly still, read out a few sentences to her. There was not much fun in doing it, because Madame Phlipon never seemed particularly impressed by such of Sophie's reflections and epigrams as she was privileged to hear. She was quite cold about the whole "liaison," and most measured in her appreciation of Sophie's epistolary style. "The transports of my burning soul were repressed by my mother's dignity." . . . "It is possible for a mother to receive avowals but never confidences. Confidences are for equals."

This attachment made M. and Madame Phlipon anxious to get their daughter safely settled in life. In those days, even among the smaller shop-

keepers, marriage was a step taken on the recommendation of parents and seldom on personal inclination, and so from the year 1771, when Manon was seventeen, the choice of a bridegroom was continually in the Phlipons' mind. The first suitor recommended by them to Manon was a man in the same line of business as Phlipon himself. The said suitor had already buried two wives, was twice the girl's age, badly pitted with small-pox and quite uninteresting. Though so obviously unsuitable and unattractive, Manon wrote reams about him and his proposal to Sophie. It is a matter of conscience,—“marriage is anyhow a repulsive institution”; but the real question is, “Ought she to see God's will in her parents' will?” She cannot, of course, “imagine that any one would marry for pleasure,” and “perhaps it may be right to do something one really hates for discipline's sake.” “A girl who thinks can hardly speak of marriage; it is indeed a terrible affair.” She would indeed be glad to know Sophie's opinion.

What would life be to some of us without an audience, without the chance of pirouetting and posturing in friendship's appreciative glass?

In August 1772 Manon caught small-pox and was very ill. She bore the illness, according to her own account, “with philosophy,” and was “immensely struck by the devotion of her mother.” Neither parent had ever had the small-pox, but neither of them ever let a day pass without kissing the marked face, which Manon was always trying to conceal. Sœur Sainte Agathe sent a cousin one day to see how the girl was getting on, and this

cousin, the mother of four children, also kissed Manon very tenderly. Can we wonder that every second or third person at Louis xv.'s Court and in the States-General was pock-marked ?

When convalescence set in, Manon was taken to stay with her father's prosperous sister, Madame Besnard. Besnard was intendant to one Haudry, a *parvenu* who had bought a beautiful country place at Soucy and also owned the neighbouring castle of Fontenay, in which he had installed his intendant as caretaker. In this way, as Aunt Besnard told her niece, "we have all the enjoyment of a country seat and park without any of the expense." Directly her guests arrived Madame Besnard insisted that they should go and pay their respects at Soucy, where M. Haudry's mother-in-law and sister-in-law did the honours. Manon was not much impressed by these ladies, who, though quite polite, seemed to her a little patronising; neither did she care about the "parasites of the Cross of S. Louis," "young men of good family who," as she explained to Sophie, "haunt the abodes of opulence as do the shades the shores of Acheron." One day these ladies and M. Haudry came to Fontenay to call on the Besnards; it was just a pleasant object for a walk for the house party from Soucy. They graciously asked the Besnards and Phlipons to dine at the big house. The invitation was gladly accepted, but what was Manon's mortification on arriving to find that her mother, her aunt and herself were only supposed to sit down with the servants! It was a dreadful blow to an embryonic Republican. The women servants were decked out, Manon says, in

cast-off finery, and the politeness of the chef and the splendid livery of the valets did not at all make up for the awkwardness of their manners and conversation. It was a shred of comfort to tell Sophie that there was a still lower table of "domestics," that at which Manon dined being that of "the officers of the house." After dinner they all played games, and Manon had plenty of time to think things out, and "to observe in this new world the prejudices, vices, and follies of the old." Here was a family of only one generation which already had acquired the grandeur and pomp of hereditary magnificence. How disheartening it was to any lover of equality to see such things! Incident after incident contributed to harden Manon's incipient contempt for privilege and wealth. To console herself for her own mortification over the dinner-party, she repeated to herself with considerable relish the words of Montesquieu: "Financiers support the State, as the cord supports the man who is hung." The experience of being treated like a servant by this *parvenu* tax farmer made a great impression on Manon, just as the visit to Madame de Boismorel had done in former days. Social inequalities became intolerable to the girl, who felt herself so much more important and valuable than the people who presumed themselves her betters. Quite honestly she admits in her *Mémoires* that her situation in life and her experience influenced her views and tended to make her a Republican.

Directly the Phlipons returned home suitors once more besieged the house. First a dealer in diamonds worth twenty-five thousand crowns, then

a butcher worth twice that sum, then a young sprig of nobility, then a doctor in a wig. After passing them all in review, Manon addressed to her puzzled and exasperated parents the following question: "Occupied from childhood up with considering the relations of man to society, nourished by pure morality, familiar with great examples, should I have lived with Plutarch and all the philosophers to unite myself to a merchant who would neither esteem nor feel anything as I do?"

The poor Phlipons must have wished their daughter's intellect at the bottom of the sea. There she was refusing good offer after good offer, and all for no reason that they could understand. One of her suitors was an ugly, penniless, but well-born young barrister called La Blancherie. He boldly invaded Phlipon's workshop, in order to conduct his courtship at close quarters. He was the author of a peculiar treatise called "Extracts from the Diary of my Travels, or the History of a Young Man for the Education of Fathers and Mothers." Manon was quite of the opinion that parents require to be educated, and she read the book with avidity, though it was a most undesirable work to place in the hands of any young girl. After reading it, she courageously wrote a eulogy on it for its author. One evening La Blancherie told Phlipon of his passion and the reason of his interest in engraving, and shortly afterwards, to Manon's disgust, he disappeared from Paris.

One of many long talks with her parents on the subject of marriage ended by Manon declaring that she would die unmarried. M. Phlipon said,



“ Oh, you are in the clouds; it’s all very well to get up there, but it is difficult to stay up. Remember that I should like some grandchildren before I am too old.” Turning on his heel, Phlipon left his ridiculous daughter to her own devices.

In considering Manon’s development we must remember that her male contemporaries even as boys were all philosophers and moralists. A very little reading of the early letters and speeches of the men who made the Revolution serves to convince us that, in knowing Manon Phlipon, we know something of the youth of the generation that made the Revolution. This is what gives value to her otherwise negligible moral sentiments. They are symptomatic of the age.

In November 1773 Madame Phlipon was asked to take her girl to see the marriage festivities at Versailles; the Comte d’Artois was about to wed a princess of Savoy. Manon was feeling very independent and republican at the time, and “ was delighted not to go ” . . . “ for, when all is said and done, I prefer staying in my cell with my books, my pen and my violin, than to push and be pushed in trying to see the setting of royalties; as to themselves, I shall see them one of these days, and there are a thousand persons who run after these famous bagatelles.” In the following May, when every one in Paris was waiting for the news of Louis xv.’s death, she was moved to say to Sophie: “ Although the obscurity of my birth, of my name, of my state seem to dispense me from interesting myself in the Government, I feel in spite of all that the general good touches me. My country *is* something to me; my attachment to it is a bond I feel in

my heart. How could it be indifferent to me? Nothing is. I feel I have rather a cosmopolitan soul, humanity and sentiment unite me to all that breathes; a Carribee interests me, the fate of a Kaffir touches me. Alexander longed for other worlds to conquer; I should wish for more to love if I did not know an Infinite Being who could absorb all my sentiments."

She overcame her prejudices sufficiently to go to Versailles in the autumn of this same year with an old family friend, Mademoiselle d'Hannaches, her uncle Abbé Bimont and her mother. Through the influence of Abbé Bimont they were lodged in the Palace itself. The apartment they occupied was in the roof in the same corridor as that of the Archbishop of Paris, and so near to his that unless he was very careful to speak low they could hear everything he said. Manon was astounded at what courtiers would submit to in the way of accommodation. "Two badly furnished rooms, in the top of which was a loft for a servant, a dark passage approach reeking of insanitary closets: this was the abode preferred by a peer of France to his own château, that he might attend the levée of the King." The visitors saw *everything*, for everything was public—masses, meals, promenades, games and presentations. Mademoiselle d'Hannaches "penetrated" everywhere, ready to throw her six hundred years' nobility in the face of any one who wished to stop her. Nose in air, she recognised some of the King's guards, and made out her family connection with them to the Phlipons. A neat little figure of a man like the Abbé Bimont, and even an ugly and well-born old

maid like Mademoiselle d'Hannaches, did not look out of place in the galleries of Versailles, but oh, when it came to the unrouged face of her respectable mother and to her own clothes Manon realised how hopelessly bourgeois their appearance was. If any one spoke to her she resented it as patronage, and felt just as uncomfortable and angry as Madame de Boismorel and M. Haudry had made her feel in days gone by. How little did any of that little party dream how great would be Manon's share in pulling down the ruins of the monarchical edifice about the heads of the newly crowned King and his pretty Austrian consort !

Manon was very busy thinking things out—impressed by the display, unimpressed by the people. “I like seeing the statues in the gardens better than the people in the Castle,” she wrote to Sophie. When Madame Phlipon asked her how she was enjoying her outing, she replied, “Very much, as it is soon going to be over. In a few days I should so hate the people I see that I should not know what to do with my hatred.” “What harm do they do you ?” asked her mother. “They make me feel injustice, and contemplate absurdity all the time.” . . . “I sighed in thinking of Athens, for in Athens I could equally have admired the Arts without being wounded by the spectacle of despotism : in spirit I walked in Greece, I assisted at the Olympian Games and I was vexed to find myself French.’ Then in prison she added, by way of qualification, that in those days she gave no thought to the storms by which the best Republican days had been agitated; she forgot the death of Socrates, the exile of Aristides, the

condemnation of Phocion. But how well she could remember that as a young woman of twenty she had dreamed Republican dreams in the wonderful Palace of Versailles amidst all the splendours which made her feel so provincial and so insignificant. In those days it had been some comfort at least to despise the system that had given rise to them, to re-establish the sense of her own identity by condemnation, and, with the swift and terrible judgment of the young, to analyse and reject three-fourths of life.

“The vain and vulgar crowd which runs to see anything new” came in for its share of censure too, and though Manon’s home was on the route of all the processions she could hardly bear to look out of the window at the sumptuous coaches or caparisoned horses or fine gentlemen going by. One winter morning in 1774 huge crowds came from all parts of Paris to the Pont Neuf to see two young men broken on the wheel. It was a lengthy way of killing people, and Manon had plenty of time for calm moralisations. It is a little surprising to find that she was far more horrified at the wickedness of the young men, one of whom was a parricide, than disgusted by the cruelty of their punishment. She wasted no pity on them, her pity and contempt were reserved for the “thousands of persons who were drawn to the bridge by secret and sanguinary curiosity.” The thought of the parricide clerk “pursues” and “obsesses” her, “she blushes,” she trembles for “humanity,” and from her downcast eyes tears fall; and for whom do the tears fall? For the young men in their strength and pride, whose



cries reach clearly to her second-floor flat ? No, but for “ human nature, human nature which can engender such atrocious crime.” “ O God, Father of mankind, can this be Thy work ? No, no, I do not believe that man is born wicked ; it must be unrestrained passion, or ill-directed education, which produces these effects against which the law is bound to act with ultimate rigour.”

These sage reflections, in process of being recorded for Sophie’s benefit, were interrupted by her father, who hauled her out of her little *réduit* to see the immense crowd. It was astonishing ; there were people at all the windows and on all the roofs. “ In truth, human nature is not respectable when you consider it *en masse*. One might think they were a lot of ants on an inch of ground.” Manon cannot understand what motive can attract so many people to see two of their kind put to death. It reminds her of Rome and the circus, “ but perhaps it may be that any violent impression gives men a more lively sentiment of their own existence.”

The next morning the interrupted letter to Sophie was continued. “ I shall be very sorry if our quarter is often the scene of executions, for I have all the difficulty in the world in escaping from the sad impression such events make on my soul. I have been thinking about it all night though I saw nothing. The miserable parricide lived on the wheel for twelve hours, and his screams could be heard from maman’s bed.”

Relenting from her stoicism of the previous evening, she wrote : “ In such moments one forgets the crime and the criminal to feel that it



is a man who suffers." But this is all she found to say when confronted by such an atrocity as the breaking of a young man upon a wheel ! It was all, too, that her generation would have said on the subject. No one can despair of the progress of humanity when they read of scenes like this, when they know that during a whole December day the people of Paris clapped their hands and cheered at the slow agony of the condemned man which provided them with such long-drawn-out enjoyment. After reading this story it becomes a little easier to understand the popularity of the guillotine and the indifferent eyes that watched the passing of the tumbrils.

Through the winter of 1774-5 Madame Phlipon's health failed rapidly, and in consequence she became more and more anxious to get her daughter safely married. She kept assuring Manon that any good man would make her happy, and the girl, exasperated by too much good advice, looked up sharply one day and said, " Yes, I know, with a happiness like yours ! " She had not meant to be so cruel, but somehow the words slipped out of her mouth, and poor Madame Phlipon was silenced. One spring day Manon came in to find her mother very ill. She was not in the least alarmed about it, as illness and death were quantities as yet unrealised in experience. Presently she was told that a priest had been sent for to administer the last sacraments. " I thought I was dreaming. The priest arrived, prayed, did I don't know what. I held a candle mechanically at the foot of the bed ; I did not speak or move, my eyes were fixed on my mother's face. The candle dropped from my

hand; I fell on the floor." When Manon became conscious again she found herself lying in the sitting-room. She struggled up and ran into her mother's room, lifted her hand, opened her eyelids, and kissed the face again and again despairingly. "I hoped to catch death," she said, "to die that very moment."

Manon knew no more until she found herself being driven away to the home of her aunt, Madame Besnard, on the Ile St. Louis. Here she was put to bed, and spent days in sobbing and nervous convulsions.

Presently her father, dressed in deepest mourning, appeared, and with clumsy efforts at consolation said that Providence had acted for the best, that her mother had finished her work in the world—the education of her daughter—and that if she had to lose one of the authors of her days it was lucky that Heaven had spared the one most useful to her future. As a result of this conversation Manon says that she, for the first time, realised what a gulf was fixed between her father and herself. "I found myself completely orphaned . . . my father could never understand."

Directly she was well Manon went home to keep house for this tactless father. It was a lonely position, and she made brave efforts to deal with the situation adequately by trying to make home pleasant, but she knew so few people to ask to the house—no one, in fact, except relations. It was difficult to discuss anything with her father, they seemed to have no ideas in common, and obviously he was immensely bored by her. She tried to play games with him in the evenings, but

it was not a success : “ I take a hand at cards to amuse my father, and we play piquet. In the intervals I try to form a conversation, but laconic answers shatter it on the spot. . . . I perspire, but it’s all in vain. Time passes, eleven strikes, my father throws himself into bed and I go to my room where I write till two or three in the morning.”

Household cares took up part of Manon’s time, but, as she said, “ one always has leisure if one knows how to occupy oneself. It is the people who do nothing who have no time for anything.” Manon was greatly in favour of doing and not talking ; her advice was to do the necessary, tiresome jobs which are called “ running a house,” but not to talk about them, for they are not interesting subjects of discussion. We all know that the machinery of life will catch one if it can and hold one away from all essentials.

Month after month dragged drearily by, and Manon sometimes sought dissipation by going to stay with Abbé Bimont at Vincennes. It was amusing in a way, but she soon got tired of the life, for “ the cellar was better furnished than the library ” and an inordinate time was spent over meals. After dinner one fat, spectacled old canon drew a trembling bow across the strings of his double bass, another canon squeaked on the flute and Manon scratched on the fiddle. As she says, “ Wasn’t that a concert to frighten cats away ? ” The concert over she went to the garden to pick roses and parsley, to look at the broody hens and the little chicks, and beat her brains to think of fresh subjects of discussion, of stories to distract conversation from the Chapter and its doings.

Through her uncle she made acquaintance with a few soldiers from the Vincennes garrison, but found most of them of "an indescribable ignorance." The only officer in whom she took any interest at this time was a "Captain of Cipayes," Dumontchéry, quartered in Pondichéry. He had already fallen a hopeless victim to Manon's charm and was trying to make a fortune in India in order to marry her.

One day her grandmother's friend, M. de Boismorel, *le Sage de Bercy*, called at the flat. Manon was not in, but Phlipon, pleased at the interest taken in his daughter, showed him her little *réduit* and even handed some of the *Œuvres de Loisir*, which were lying on the table, to the visitor. Manon was very much upset about this when she came in, for the *Œuvres de Loisir* were dedicated exclusively to Sophie. She scolded her father well for his breach of confidence, but the breach had a very happy effect, since it provoked a charming letter from M. de Boismorel and the offer of the use of his library. He also begged Manon to bring M. Phlipon to his country house at Petit Bercy. Manon felt hardly brave enough to do this, remembering her mortifying experience with old Madame de Boismorel, but at last, as her father insisted, they went to Bercy. They were kindly received both by Madame de Boismorel *mère* and by M. de Boismorel's wife. Manon felt confidence in herself, and talked away very grandly to the ladies about her reasons for not marrying and for not wearing feathers in her head; then M. de Boismorel carried her off, first to see "a superb cedar of Lebanon" and then to his library, whence

she borrowed *Bayle's Dictionary* and the *Mémoires of Academis*. The Boismorels were kind enough to invite M. Phlipon and his daughter to dine with them on another occasion, and this time M. de Boismorel's son, an unattractive youth of seventeen, was present, and two or three business men who had been asked to amuse M. Phlipon. In the evening a certain number of people came in, "the daughters of a marquis," "councillors" and "baronesses," and probably they made Manon feel rather shy and awkward, for she says they were "a contemptible crew." However, the evening passed off fairly well. M. de Boismorel then and there invited Manon to accompany him to a public séance of the Academy—an invitation which she accepted with alacrity. There she saw d'Alembert and La Harpe. The latter made an oration on Catinat, and this inspired M. de Boismorel with the idea of making a pilgrimage to Saint-Gratian where this great soldier finished his days. This outing is so entirely characteristic of the cultivated and subdued pleasures of the eighteenth century that it is worth recording. "It was a philosophic promenade entirely to my taste," says Manon. They went, a party of four, two Boismorels and two Phlipons, to the valley of Montmorency, made their way thence to Saint-Gratian and sat in the shade of the trees planted by Catinat's own hand.

"After a frugal dinner we passed the rest of the day in the delicious park, and saw the little house in which Jean-Jacques had lived. . . . In one of those moments of repose in which one silently considers the majesty of nature, M. de Boismorel drew a manuscript from his pocket



and read us a little known extract from Montesquieu, telling how he was recognised at Marseilles by a young man whose father's life he had saved, and how he disclaimed the gratitude of those he had obliged."

Manon remarked that "the generous man never seeks for gratitude." But however apt she felt her own conversation to be she could not help being deeply conscious of the obvious disparity of education and breeding between her father and M. de Boismorel. It quite ruined her enjoyment even of her most dignified moments, for she knew that her father was only asked into such circles for her sake, and that he really had nothing in common with literary people. In some ways it was quite a comfort when the philosophic promenade was over.

Shortly after this excursion M. de Boismorel had a sunstroke. He was walking one hot day from Bercy to Vincennes to see Manon, taking with him Delille's translation of the *Georgics*. He died a few days later, and what to Manon was a very delightful friendship came to an untimely end.

But though one friendship ended there were others to take its place, and amongst them that of two elderly men of good birth—M. de Sévelinges and M. de Sainte-Lette. Both these persons play a great part in the Cannet correspondence, and both were important in so far as their influence over Manon went, for they enhanced her sense of her own value and educated her in the ways of the great world.

M. de Sainte-Lette had come to Paris from Pondichéry in 1776 with a special letter of intro-

duction from Captain Dumontchéry of the Cipayes to Manon. The newcomer proved to be a man of sixty. Manon described him to Sophie as proud in bearing, with "the eye of an eagle, and a sombre, penetrating expression." She was immensely flattered by his courteous compliments—immensely interested by his accounts of India and America. It seemed "he had served four or five kings in two hemispheres." Listening to his stories of Louisiana and San Domingo was better than reading any book of travels; and then his mission—what could be more humane? He had come to Europe, it appeared, to obtain a grant from the Home Government to lay up reserves of grain against lean years. He described the ricefields of India, their two annual crops and the terrible famine that devastated the land when these crops failed. Manon's eyes grew round to hear that in this far-off country people were reduced to selling their children for bread, and that out of this custom child-stealing had become common. "O Ciel!" exclaimed M. de Sainte-Lette, "had I but money enough to buy them all and set them all free!" Though a poet and man of sentiment, Manon discovered her new friend to be a frank atheist, and soon we find her telling Sophie that there is "hardly any one so much to be pitied as an old and celibate atheist." The intimacy progressed rapidly—Manon found that since M. de Sainte-Lette had a very dear friend, a M. de Sévelinges, he was quite able to understand the depth of her feeling for Sophie. A few months later Manon informed Sophie that "M. de Sainte-Lette is my usual companion; I see him three or

four times a week," and "when he comes to luncheon he stays from 12 till 9!" One confidential day she put her commonplace book into his hands, with the words, "*In manus tuas commendo spiritum meum*"—a scene which had no doubt been carefully rehearsed beforehand. After reverentially turning the leaves of this manuscript M. de Sainte-Lette urged her to write a book. "Under another name then," said Manon, "for I would sooner gnaw off my fingers than become an author." These strangely assorted friends read poetry and prose together. Such things as a canto by J. B. Rousseau, or a few verses by M. de Voltaire, "filled them with genuine enthusiasm"; they "both wept in reading the same thing, and that for the tenth time." At last M. de Sainte-Lette had to return to India and the ten months' happy intercourse was ended. Before leaving Paris he recommended his friend M. de Sévelinges d'Espagne, a recent widower, to Manon's considerate care. A new intimacy immediately sprang up, which in some respects was even stranger than the old. It began in a commonplace literary way.

The Academy of Besançon had offered a prize for the best paper on the theme: "How the education of women could contribute to making men better." Manon sent in a paper, so did Bernardin de Sainte-Pierre and other eminent persons. Manon submitted her essay to M. de Sévelinges; he criticised it, and sent her in return an academical discourse of his own on "The Faculty of Speech." This occasioned further correspondence, and presently the widower, finding his solitude

in the country dull, wrote and said how delightful the society of a thinking woman would be to him. This led to new advances, and soon we find Manon writing a letter *pour Sophie seule*, explaining the difficult situation which had been created by a philosophic friendship, and debating whether it would be possible to marry M. de Sévelinges *en amie, en sœur*.

Manon, who seemed to see nothing odd in his proposal, set out the advantages and disadvantages of such a union at length. M. de Sévelinges, it appeared, was fifty-six years old, had a country house and a fair income; his manners were gentle, his tastes contemplative. He assured Manon that she alone was able to inspire him with fresh interest in a life that had become altogether insipid. Sophie is asked to judge the situation. Manon begs her to bear in mind that she is already twenty-four years old, and that she can imagine nothing more delightful than "a life consecrated to friendship." She flirted with M. de Sévelinges' offer with hesitating gratitude, but suddenly the suitor changed his mind—*se ravisait*—why, we do not know; he may have been making game of poor Manon; anyhow, correspondence and friendship suddenly ceased. Later on, when Manon became engaged to M. Roland, she found this episode difficult to explain away, and her lover characterised the behaviour of Sévelinges as infamous.

Having had enough of old men for the moment, Manon turned once more to La Blancherie, who had returned from banishment. He was still constant, or at least so it seemed. Depicting

her own state of mind about him to Sophie, she wrote :

“ When I am immersed in science and study, good-bye to love ! . . . but if a certain visitor comes, my heart goes tic-tac. . . . When I am deep in philosophy I find D. L. B. almost *négligéable*, but turn the glass and I go mad.”

La Blancherie was pleased to see how he excited her. To Manon he looked “ changed and ill,” and she confided to Sophie that “ a single word from her would bring him back to life.” As a reward for the doglike fidelity to her person with which she credited him, she invited the young man to come and mourn with her at the anniversary service for her mother’s death.

The black altar, the pale, flickering candle-flames, the penitential psalms, the crape-decked assistants, all contributed to play on Manon’s emotions. “ If I had been obsessed by my old religious ideas I should have been stifled.” As it was, she was tolerably calm, quite calm enough to observe La Blancherie’s demeanour and to formulate a phrase that would impress and possibly shock Sophie.

“ I blushed at first for those adulterous tears which flowed together for my mother and my lover (heavens ! what a word). But ought they to have made me ashamed ? No, indeed ; reassured by the justice of my sentiments, I took thee to witness, oh beloved and holy shade, of the purity of my flame.”

One Sunday soon after the anniversary service, when walking with her father in the Tuileries Gardens, she started at seeing La Blancherie. By



a strange coincidence they were dressed in the same colour, and, in the words of a popular song, she wrote to Sophie: "*Ça fait, ça fait toujours plaisir.*" Another day she saw him in the Luxembourg Garden with a feather in his hat. "I cannot tell you how this cursed feather worries me," she wrote to Sophie; and her companion, Mademoiselle d'Hannaches, made things worse by saying that La Blancherie was always running after girls with money, and that he was nicknamed the lover of the eleven thousand virgins. "These ideas are desolating; they diminish enthusiasm," poor Manon told Sophie; and then gradually climbing down from her perch of praise, we find that La Blancherie becomes a subject for "serious meditation"; ten days later we find that the scene in the Luxembourg Garden has "extinguished enthusiasm." A few pages are consecrated to the shade of "D. L. B.": "It is not to thee I sacrifice, but to the type, to the model man whom I believed thee to resemble. I am deceived, and I deplore my error more for thee than for myself. I have my ideal; thou art no longer anything (I have great difficulty in believing this!)."

Shortly after her mother's death Manon had been given *La Nouvelle Héloïse*; it was not a new book, having been published some fifteen years earlier, but on all hands it was found to be enthralling. Two years previously she had read *Emile*, and had been captivated by its style and its theories—Rousseau, she declared, began to rival Plutarch as an influence in her life. "Plutarch disposed me to become Republican, he awakened that force and that pride which make



[Bauer, Marchet]

LE CLOS DE LA PLATIÈRE



its character, he inspired me with a true enthusiasm for public virtues and for liberty. Rousseau showed me to what domestic happiness I might pretend, and the ineffable delights which I was capable of tasting."

Sophie was extremely unsympathetic over the Rousseau cult, and Manon writes: "I carry Rousseau in my heart, and I do not suffer any one to attack him vaguely." Her letters from this time on teem with unacknowledged quotations and adaptations from *Emile* and other sources.

In February 1776 she determined somehow to get in touch with the great man. He had settled in Paris in 1770, and lived there till his death in 1778. His mind was clouded by vague suspicions and distrusts; he madly denied himself to all friends and worked at his old trade of copying music. Manon knew that he was not accessible to visitors, so she decided to send him a letter and then to go and fetch the reply in person. Sophie saw no conceivable reason why Manon should write to Jean-Jacques. Manon, "fully sensible how absurd enthusiasm for great men seems in the eyes of those who do not experience it," explained that her father's friend, M. Moré, had occasion to go and see Rousseau about the composition of some little tunes, that he had offered to take her with him, but that she preferred, on the whole, to write to him, and in consequence had composed a letter of which both her father and M. Moré approved. Two hours after the letter had been dispatched she flew off to get the answer "with her heart in her mouth." She went into the bootmaker's alley in the rue Platière,

where the great man lived, climbed to the second floor and knocked at the door. "One could not enter a temple with more veneration than I felt at that humble portal; I was thrilled, but quite without that timidity with which the little people of the world, for whom I have no reverence, inspire me. Thérèse opened the door; she looked severe, even a little hard !

"Madame, does not M. Rousseau live here ?" timidly inquired Manon.

"Yes, Mademoiselle."

"Could I speak to him ?" she continued.

"What do you want with him ?" asked Thérèse.

"I came to get an answer to a letter I wrote to him just now," answered Manon.

"Mademoiselle, you cannot speak with him, but you may tell the people who made you write—for surely it was not you who wrote a letter like that ?" said Thérèse.

"Pardon me," Manon interrupted.

"But the writing alone shows that it is from a man," protested Thérèse.

"Would you like to see me write ?" Manon asked, laughing.

Thérèse shook her head, adding, "All that I can tell you is that my husband has absolutely renounced everything of that kind, he has done with it all. . . . He is old enough to rest."

"I know," said Manon; "but I should have been very much flattered to receive this message from his own mouth. I should have taken advantage of the opportunity of offering my homage to the man I esteem most in all the world. Pray



receive it, Madame.” The visitor waited to see if her politeness would break down any barrier, but Thérèse merely thanked her and kept her hand on the latch, and Manon had to descend the stairway with the very slight satisfaction of knowing that Rousseau thought her letter sufficiently well turned not to be the work of a woman, and with the small annoyance of having walked there for nothing.

Sophie still continued to carp at Rousseau, and Manon felt obliged to administer a covert rebuke :

“ I owe him all that is best in me ; his genius warms my soul. I have felt him fire me, elevate me, ennoble me. I do not deny that there are paradoxes in *Emile* which our customs make impracticable. But what sane, what profound views ! What useful precepts ! What beauties redeem the few faults. . . . *Héloïse* is a masterpiece of sentiment. The woman who reads it without finding herself better for the reading, or without desiring to become better, has but a soul of mud, an apathetic spirit ; she will never rise above the common. . . .”

In a second letter to Rousseau, written in defiance of Sophie, she says : “ If I had only admired you, I should not have attached so high a price to the happiness of seeing you. But I cherish in you the friend of humanity, its benefactor and mine ; it is in this that you appear to me to merit my homage and that I like to render it you.”

It was exceedingly lucky for Manon that she was taken up with enthusiasm for Rousseau. It prevented her from worrying about family affairs. Philpon had neglected his work since his wife's death ; he had but two apprentices left, the business

was going downhill fast, and there was very little money to be had for housekeeping, as most of it was spent on his mistress. Even Manon's "dot" was gradually melting away.

The situation was difficult and distressing for a girl living at home, and Manon consulted her relations as to what ought to be done, and they foolishly enough recommended her "to talk frankly to her father." This required a good deal of courage; but Manon was never deficient in courage, and plunged into the difficult discussion without flinching. She began by apologising to her father for having to say anything about the matter, asked that an inventory of her mother's things might be taken, that she might at once be given such money as was her due, for then she would be able to decide whether to learn a trade or go into a convent. She also told him that she had been to call on his mistress, and that there was no use in his trying to conceal anything. M. Phlipon got into a very excited state, and told her that though he was made to watch her conduct she was not made to watch his, and wound up with complaints at the cruel way in which Manon was hurting him.

Shortly after this incident she wrote to Sophie : "My relations with my father pain me, and would lacerate me if my strength was not above the ordinary. I hardly ever see him; and yet . . . I try to be always the same. . . . I wish to give him my care, my time, my money." She hardly ever left the house except to go marketing; but she was philosophical, and always kept in her mind the idea, the theme as it were of her whole

life, "preparation." "I try to educate my capacity to be equal to all occasions. . . . My poor mind sleeps, my knowledge decays—I heap up arrears of enjoyment, and it may be with me as with the poor priest who saved hard and only ate whitening all his life in order to have good fish after his death."

There is no doubt about it that Manon had a very rough, unhappy time with her father in 1777-8. She was driven both by temperament and by circumstances to depend upon herself—upon her own initiative and power, extracting what she could from life. Everything tended to build up the detached, self-dependent woman whom we get to know so well during the Revolution. The sort of temper she set herself to maintain is expressed in a letter to Sophie. "Surrounded as I am by misfortune, plunged as I am into sadness, I am still not unhappy. I never will be happy no matter what happens. . . ."

## CHAPTER III

### COURTSHIP AND MARRIAGE

“La petite érudition superficielle est infiniment fatigante. . . .”

“Je ne sais pas même si un peu de folie n’anime pas utilement les qualités de l’intelligence.”—*Mélanges et Lettres*, XIMENÉS DOUDAN.

ON examining her state of mind in 1778 Manon announced to Sophie that she feared “the approach of love.” She went so far as to confess that an unknown some one had “attacked and almost captured her soul.” Indications of this new interest are to be found in the waning intimacy of the letters to “Cannet.” They no longer ring true with feeling but become redundantly vague and rhetorical. A person of Manon’s temperament never ceases to feel and never ceases to need a confidante; so who the new friend is we have now to learn. It is necessary to go back to the year 1776 in order to assist at the first meeting between Manon and M. Roland de la Platière, the man who, after so many misgivings, she was eventually to marry, or, as she put it, to whom she was to “unite her destiny.” A few months after Madame Phlipon’s death, a gentleman called at the flat bearing a letter of introduction from Mademoiselle Cannet. Manon happened to be at home, dressed in a white wrapper, a *négligé* particularly admired by Sophie and which she fancied

would make a good impression on any stranger. M. Roland de la Platière was a man of forty-two. His high forehead, yellow skin, grey hair and grave manners made him seem older than his real age. He was no man of the world, but rather a student, a philosopher, who had lived a good deal alone and was inclined to be egotistical in his conversation. He was sure of himself and of his value in the world, and he had come to believe that it mattered very much to others to know what he did and thought. Sophie Cannel had warned Manon in her letter of introduction that the only weaknesses of which she could accuse him were liking to talk too much of himself and praising the ancients at the expense of his contemporaries. Except for these little faults she would describe him as "an enlightened man of pure habits."

Manon was charmed by her new visitor; it would indeed have required more than a little pedantry to frighten her. Conversation, of course, could not bound along very freely in the presence of interrupting M. Philpon, but still it skipped lightly enough from Rousseau to the Abbé Raynal's book, from Swiss mountains to Versailles. M. Roland's smile, faint and deprecatory, suggested unplumbed depths of caustic humour. The manly timbre of his voice and his short sentences suggested the idea of economy of power. He made an altogether excellent impression, and after all too short a call took his leave, begging permission to return. Manon cordially granted this permission, but felt uncertain as to whether he really meant to come again. But come again he did, several



times, during the year 1776. Sometimes the visits went off well, sometimes the river of conversation flowed muddily, sometimes it ran into some arid desert and lost itself in sandbanks of classic moralisations. To Sophie, who was kept informed of the progress of the intercourse, Manon wrote :

“ I am quite sure I do not please M. Roland as much as you imagine. I may perhaps not please him at all. We speak but coldly of literature. I chatter a good deal, or else say nothing, because I am more disposed to little philosophic conferences than to learned conversation.”

“ An infernal cold ” made Manon fear that she must on one occasion have appeared even stupider than she did at first, and she told Sophie she should

“ be extremely surprised if M. Roland comes to see such an insipid person again. . . . This *contretemps* annoys me the more that your friend is an interesting man to know. In spite of our apparent opposition on some subjects, we are agreed on principle ; and if only he knew me as you know me, I do not think my way of thinking would suit him at all badly. I was tempted at first to think that he inclined to strange opinions. A man who sees nothing in Buffon but a charlatan, and who only admits his style to be pretty ; who looks upon Raynal’s history as hardly philosophical at all, and pretends that it is only good enough to lie on dressing-tables—such a man seems to me very strange in himself. I listen to his reasoning, and as I only stick to my own opinions till I find better ones, I esteem Raynal a little less, and begin to distrust Buffon. Probably he thinks me docile because, as I told you, I talked very little. As for the ancients, we understand each other better on that ground. I admire Greek virtues and modes of government. Then if I pass over the early doings of the Roman Republic in silence, I nowhere find the energy, the heroism, the love of country in which great deeds originate ; I seek

vainly for them elsewhere. Of course one finds great men, but not nations of great men. Our modern histories offer no examples of those interesting revolutions in which a whole people agitates and fights for liberty and for the public good. One only sees subjects killing each other or fighting in the interest of princes, and, as Raynal says, these are but slaves who fight in chains to amuse their masters."

One of the effects that these conversations with M. Roland had upon Manon was to increase her desire for seclusion and work. It is always possible that in discussion with her new friend she may have found her own knowledge of classic days, her standards of philosophy, her general information a little inadequate and more than a little superficial, and may have felt the need of deepening the channels of her mind. We find her longing for "solid work," "for retirement," for "time to nourish her heart," "to cultivate her spirit."

"I am very much annoyed at being a woman; I ought to have another soul or live in another century. I ought to have been born a Roman or a Spartan woman, or at least a French man. As such, I should have chosen the republic of letters for my country, or one of those republics where one may be a man . . . and obey nothing but the law. I feel myself chained to a manner of existence which is not mine. I am like an animal from sunburnt Africa which has been transported to our menageries and is obliged to restrict and cabin in a tiny space all those faculties and all that robust and free nature which was created to develop in some happy clime. On every hand my spirit and my heart find the shackles of opinion, the iron of prejudice, and all my strength is wasted in vainly shaking my chains. Oh, liberty! idol of energetic souls, food of virtue, you are but a name to me!

What is the good of my enthusiasm for the public good when I can do nothing for it? Ah, Sophie, Sophie, imagine to what extent I am conscious of friendship, as with me it is the only sentiment which is not captive."

Towards the end of the year 1776 M. Roland's business summoned him to Italy, and before leaving he confided his manuscripts to Mademoiselle Phlipon, begging her to use her discretion with regard to them should any mischance befall him. Manon felt this to be a most touching mark of esteem and confidence, and received the papers "gratefully and graciously." Two days before his departure she invited him to meet M. de Sainte-Lette at a farewell feast. The evening was tinged by the sense of departure and by sentimental foreboding over the future, and when M. Roland rose to take his leave, he gravely begged permission to embrace his hostess. Manon blushed scarlet, and M. de Sainte-Lette said gravely, "How happy you are in leaving thus, but hasten back and ask for as much again."

The business that took M. Roland to Italy was part of his life-work. He was an Inspector of Commerce, and in this capacity was continually travelling. The Rhine Provinces, Belgium, England, Switzerland had all been visited by him, and as he avows that "he carried no other ambition about with him except that of acquiring information" we may conclude that he was a very well-informed man. He was also excessively industrious, and had written many memoranda on different economic and rural subjects, such as dyeing, sheep-rearing, bleaching and the manufacture of cotton velvet.

Roland came from the Beaujolais, and sprang from old country stock of no particular distinction. His father had died in debt, and his eldest brother had been obliged to sell the family estates, with the exception of a house at Villefranche and a neighbouring farm at Clos, in order to pay the debts. His four elder brothers became priests, and as he did not wish to follow in their footsteps, he left home at eighteen for Lyons<sup>1</sup> to work in a linen business, and get to know all he could about the commerce of the town. Later he went to Rouen, and through the influence of his relation, M. Godinot, Inspector of Manufactures, he was appointed a supernumerary inspector. Roland seized every opportunity that presented itself, and soon distinguished himself by activity, hard work and the writing of memoranda and reports. First and last Roland was a penman; it was his making in the beginning of his life and his undoing in the end. Promotion did not come quickly, and after ten years of work in Rouen he became a Deputy Inspector at Clermont-de-Lodève, and shortly afterwards Inspector of Picardy,<sup>2</sup> with an office at Amiens. From Amiens he made journeys of investigation to Germany, England and other places, and it was from Amiens that he bore his letter of introduction to Mademoiselle Phlipon in the spring of the year 1776.

The commercial mission with which he had been entrusted by Trudaine in the summer of 1776 made him think that he would have to spend some time in Italy, and before leaving Paris he promised Manon to make notes of his impressions and post them

<sup>1</sup> 1752-4.

<sup>2</sup> 1766.



to her under cover of his Benedictine brother, Prior of the College of Cluny. Roland had spoken of Manon several times to this brother Pierre, and since the Prior was anxious that one at least of the family should marry, he set himself to further what he believed or hoped was Roland's intention by zealously forwarding to Mademoiselle Phlipon all the open notes that reached him, notes describing Rome, Sicily, Malta, Vesuvius and other places, out of which at a later time the book known as *Lettres d'Italie* was compiled. The travels lasted just over a year, and soon after Roland got back to his home in Villefranche he wrote to remind Mademoiselle Phlipon of his existence, again sending the letter to her through his brother. The Prior, who had never seen Manon, walked round to the Quai de l'Horloge himself to deliver the note, but failed to find her in ; however, feeling convinced that she must take a very particular interest in the traveller, he ventured a few weeks later to tell her that his poor brother was lying very ill of fever at Clos, and that a few words of interest and sympathy from her would contribute not a little to his recovery. It was not till November 1777 that the Prior first saw Manon face to face, and from that moment his mind was clear—his brother must certainly marry this charming, clever, serious young woman.

In the spring of 1778 Roland came to Paris to try and get a better post ; he wished to be made an Inspector-General of Commerce. In June he was busy acclimatising English sheep in the Boulonnais ; in July he was in England on business connected with this enterprise, inspecting flocks,



talking to farmers, going over factories and warehouses, and as a result of all this experience he published his first work, a monograph *On the Rearing of Sheep and the Culture of Wool*. In September he went back to his work at Amiens, and it seemed to Manon that her friendship could not mean very much to him, for he never wrote her a word that autumn. One little letter, it is true, came on the last day of the year, but it only said that he was working harder than ever, and that, "like the Grand Lama, he never went out, and hoped thereby to win the respect of the public."

Business, however, brought the Inspector to Paris early in the New Year of 1779, but it was business of a kind that enabled him to fit in daily Italian readings with his little friend of the Quai de l'Horloge. The strange alchemy of love worked in the arid soul of Roland till one day the transmutation was complete and he declared himself her lover. Manon, half frightened, half flattered by the vehemence and emotion of a man whom she had described to Sophie as being "without sex," promptly ran off to take refuge with her uncle at Vincennes. Was real life then like this? Was passion then so crude, was love so unlike sentiment? We all approach the unknown with feelings of mixed fear and curiosity, and Manon, like the rest of us, regretted the old familiar things, and yet was impelled forward to the new experience, on to progressive life. She sat down in the Canon's house soon after she arrived and wrote begging Roland to give her back the gentle, affectionate, sentimental friendship to which she had grown so well accustomed; the ardour of his caresses had

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terrified her. Can he not leave her simple soul in peace? Can he not go back to plain friendship? But there is no going back for any man or woman in this way, and Manon knew this even before she received Roland's reply. He was hurt and annoyed in the sort of way a middle-aged, lonely man would be at receiving such an answer; it made him feel he had made a fool of himself. He at least was no Sainte-Lette or Sévelinges, but a straightforward, honourable man who loved Manon and wanted her for his wife. She had encouraged him after all to hope for success, and now he realises that "she counts his happiness for nothing," and that "he must expect banishment from her presence." Manon, who was not at all anxious to dismiss her distinguished suitor, told him that it "frightened her to be dragged further than friendship" and that she had wished to live celibate, but at the same time longs to preserve his companionship. She may be "the victim of sentiment" but "she will never be any man's plaything, nor has she any desire to give herself over to the empire of a passion which with her would become transport and delirium." Roland, displeased with these strange rhetorical efforts, asked her for a plain answer to a plain question: may he hope that she will marry him, "Yes" or "No"? After many circumlocutions Manon answered this appeal by saying, "You have won me!" Thus, on the 6th of May 1779, Manon Phlipon engaged herself definitely to marry M. Roland de la Platière. Agitated and eager, the lover wrote to set his seal upon the agreement. "You are mine, you have sworn it; it is irre-

vocable. Yes, my friend, my tender, faithful friend, I wanted *Yes*, for the assurance of your sentiments was not the irrevocable gift of your person."

The letters written during their engagement are known as the *Correspondance amoureuse*. In reading these tepid, bloodless, daily effusions we see no sign of the passionate woman whom we are later on to know. The shadow of love flits faintly across these sentimental outpourings; sometimes it seems about to change from shadow to substance, and then again elusively vanishes in a mist of nebulous phrases. Viewed as love-letters they are very, very dull, but viewed as human documents they give one the state of Manon's mind and the trend of Roland's character. Manon was not really in love, and, without confessing it, she regarded marriage with this respectable, well-educated official as a door of escape into a more tranquil and settled world. We look for those chance sparks struck by lovers, for those glorious similes, invocations, adorations to which the birth of passion gives rise. We find none; the spirit of the letters is colder than a dead friendship, grey as the morning mist; they are the letters of a man who wants a wife, and of a woman who tries to delude herself with sentiment but who really wants a home.

In lighter moments Manon addresses her lover as *petit coquin*, but soon relapses into sententiousness, and urges him to be her master, prop, crown.

"May your soul animate me, may it elevate me and make me always better, more amiable, more worthy of

you. Your will shall be my law ; my choice is to follow it, my project to divine it and read it before you express it ; my great business will be to satisfy you and to add unceasingly to your satisfaction. I do not fear to stray ; my path is in your footsteps. Direct, order, wish ! My prize is your regard ; it is by your merit that I am worth anything, it is for you alone that I mean to exist. . . . Prepare our dwelling ; it will be the asylum of fidelity and happiness, or those have never inhabited the earth."

A little of this sort of thing goes a long way, and there is a great deal of it in the *Correspondance amoureuse* : it is not even original, for it is mostly derived from the letters of Julie in *La Nouvelle Héloïse*. Poor Roland was nearly as bored as a modern reader by these effusions, they seemed to him so empty and so silly. Lovers, we know, should talk of each other, of themselves, the perennial wonderful subject. There is no egoism to compare with love. "Speak to me of thyself," he wrote despairingly, "and I beg you, my friend, make no more phrases, for the least of the harm they do me is that they convey no meaning."

Roland would really have preferred anything from Manon rather than the nebulous, grandiose sentiments with which her letters abounded ; he wanted to know her wishes and opinions as to house, servants, furniture, clothes. He was all for the realities of commonplace domesticity ; she, still haunted by the unrealised feelings that passion was reputed to evoke and the presentiment of a great future, could not bring herself to discuss such commonplaces, and so the correspondents are often set at cross-purposes.



M. Phlipon, who knew nothing of all the interminable verbiage in which the engagement was being suffocated, soon began to wonder why M. Roland did not approach him formally to ask for his daughter's hand, and took it into his head to precipitate matters by writing a pompous, authoritative kind of letter to his future son-in-law. Roland, of course, resented this, and told Manon that he wouldn't have any one, even her father, poking his nose into his affairs, and that he would no more brook interference from her family than he would from his own, and that, in his opinion, Manon had already consulted her father too much in the matter.

Hardly was this trouble smoothed out than Phlipon managed to create another difficulty by refusing to give his formal consent to the engagement until he was shown the five months' correspondence between Roland and his daughter. This demand Manon refused, of course, to accede to. Henceforward Phlipon's opposition was absolute and violent. Misunderstanding followed misunderstanding. Manon moped, read Goldoni and Dante, "nursed a sombre indignation against her father, and finally, to make a long story short, bolted to her old convent and the sheltering arms of Sœur Sainte Agathe for comfort.

From the convent Roland received exalted letters, composed by the strange young person who still did not seem to know her own mind. He was huffy with Manon, and she nearly lost his good opinion through her eccentric behaviour. Neither conduct nor correspondence was calculated to encourage a middle-aged and touchy lover.



For example, what could any one make of such phrases as these ?

“ I associate all that is praiseworthy and honest with your face. This attachment to you, which I have exalted into a passion, which has been nourished on contradiction, is in truth the spring and the soul which animates my life. . . . I see you from another angle as the occasion of the most poignant sufferings I have ever experienced. Well, never has virtue seemed more beautiful to me, and you are not less dear than you were : I adore the former with transport, I associate the latter complacently with it.”

“ Let us sacrifice together to friendship, sublime, sweet and consoling friendship, which your Greeks knew how to honour and of which our hearts are worthy to be the temple. . . . Well, as we must sweat like galley-slaves to be worth anything, let us gather our strength together and tire the malignity of fate by our constancy.”

She assured Roland that though her letters often reflected her changing moods she was ever constant, and thought it foolish and sad that the happiness of two human beings should be blighted by a little misunderstanding, a little interference. The poor man did not know what to make of her, and went back to his work in an upset, puzzled frame of mind, then relapsed into silence as far as Manon was concerned, which was quite the wisest thing he could do.

Meanwhile Manon, whose wish for marriage was stimulated by a few weeks of conventual life, began to be uneasy at Roland's absence and silence, and to wonder whether she had not made an ass of herself. At last she laid down all subterfuge and begged him to come to her. When the laggard lover appeared at the grille of the *parloir*

Manon quickly realised that her presence made him once more *enflammé*. They talked happily and she entreated him to come back soon; when he did so he saw on her "the face of prosperity." Again he offered his hand, and this time his Benedictine brother pressed his suit. Manon reassured as to the devotion of her lover once more pondered deeply before finally committing herself.

"I thought profoundly over what I ought to do. I did not conceal from myself the fact that a man of less than forty-five would not have waited several months in the hope of making me change my mind, and I must confess that that alone had reduced my sentiments to a measure which held no illusions; on the other hand, I reflected that this well-considered insistence assured me that I was appreciated, and that if he had got over the possible exterior disadvantages of an alliance with me, I was quite certain to get from him an esteem which I should find no difficulty in justifying. And if marriage was, as I thought it, a severe tie, an association in which the woman makes herself responsible for the happiness of two individuals, would it not be better to exercise my faculties, my courage, in this honourable task than in the isolation in which I then lived?"

In short, she argued herself into marrying Roland.

It was not the passion or adoration or idealism of youth—but it was perhaps something more enduringly reasonable, for it carried Manon as in a sheath over the storms and troubles of matrimonial life for thirteen years.

A few days before the wedding she broke the news of her engagement to Sophie in phrases worthy of any of Rousseau's heroines.

"Intimately penetrated without being intoxicated or stupefied, I face my destiny with a peaceable and melt-

ing eye. Touching and numerous duties will fill my heart and my time. I shall no longer be an isolated human being moaning over its uselessness, seeking to employ its activity in a manner which would prevent the evil of an embittered sensibility. . . . A woman cherished by a man I respect and love, I shall find my happiness in the inexpressible charm of contributing to his—in short, I marry M. Roland.”

The secret was out at last, and with a kind of relief Manon was able once more to be candid with her old friend. She is going to marry a man to whom Sophie was the means of introducing her—that she never could and never would forget.

Manon went back to her father’s flat just before the wedding, and was married to M. Roland de la Platière in the Church of St. Barthélemy in the Cité, on 4th February 1780. Dom Roland, the Benedictine, and Selincourt Cannet, Sophie’s brother, were among the witnesses. Manon had at last turned her back on the life of theory to face the life of fact.

In prison Madame Roland, disillusioned with marriage and intoxicated by the sense of passion she was then experiencing, wrote :

“ I became the wife of a good man who the more he came to know me the more he loved me. Married in all the seriousness of reason—I did not find anything to attract me away from it ; and I devoted myself to it with a whole-heartedness more enthusiastic than calculated. By dint of considering only my partner’s happiness, I saw that something was wanting to my own : I did not cease for a single minute to see in my husband one of the most estimable men that exist, one to whom I might feel myself honoured to belong ; but I often felt that there was a disparity between us ; that the ascendancy of a

dominating character, added to twenty more years than mine, made one of these superiorities superfluous."

Although his office was at Amiens, Roland was kept in Paris for the first eight months of married life. The Intendants of Commerce had summoned him to the central office to assist them in drawing up some new trade regulations. Their Picardy Inspector knew a very great deal about foreign methods of dealing with such questions, and also was an authority on woollen and cotton goods. He had made himself highly unpopular in his department by maintaining the then extraordinary doctrine that a workman was free to work where he pleased,<sup>1</sup> and that he was not justly liable to imprisonment for quitting an employer on his own initiative. So unpopular indeed was he that the inhabitants of Amiens had petitioned for his removal to another post. Roland, who prided himself on carrying the principle of liberty into everything, was a free trader, and strongly deprecated efforts to protect or, as he would have said, to restrict commerce and manufactures. Many people wished at that time to protect French woollen and cotton manufactures against English competition; Roland, on the other hand, tried to improve French trade by setting himself to acclimatise English sheep, to introduce the spinning-jenny and looms for making cotton velvet to his countrymen. To this end he had travelled in England in 1771, and had arranged for English workmen to be sent to France to teach the use of the new machines.

<sup>1</sup> "Le Sieur Roland . . . a posé en principe absolu que tout ouvrier est libre de travailler où bon lui semble" (*Lettres*, vol. ii. App. p. 606).

The regulations proposed by Government in 1780 embodied the old evils of restriction, which he had exposed in a scathing memorandum the previous year—as he said, they “violated the very principle of liberty.” Roland always took life hard—and his discussions with the Intendants of Commerce made him irascible and dyspeptic, so much so that his health really began to suffer, and his wife almost wondered whether he was going to live. During the first months of marriage she prepared and cooked all his food herself, and nursed him as well as she could. It was very dull for the poor bride, but she made the best of it, working hard as secretary, copyist and proof-reader to her husband. The proof-reading consisted of articles on home industries and the *Lettres d’Italie*, which they had settled to publish. They lived in furnished rooms,<sup>1</sup> and practically worked all day long. Manon, determined to divest herself as far as was possible of individual life and ambition, was at home to none but her husband’s friends. Most of them came on business: for example, M. de Lalande, the astronomer, was collaborating with Roland in some articles on the Leather Crafts; other less distinguished persons came to compare notes on other industries. Even Manon’s “unique private recreation”—a course of Natural History and Botany at the Jardin du Roi under Jussieu—had a bearing on Roland’s work. It was through attending this class that she made acquaintance with the charming, brilliant M. Bosc d’Antic, an official in the Post Office who,

<sup>1</sup> Firstly, in rooms of which the situation is unknown. Secondly, in the Hôtel de Lyon, rue St. Jacques.



having private means, could indulge his taste for Natural Science. He became an intimate friend of both husband and wife this summer, and thirteen years later, during the months of the Terror, when friendship was hard to prove, he kept Manon's cell furnished with fresh flowers from the garden, which had ceased to be called *Le Jardin "du Roi"* and had become *Le Jardin "des Plantes."* Lanthénas, the friend whom Roland had made on his Italian journey, was also living at the Hôtel de Lyon this summer. He studied anatomy from morning till night, "*le compagnon est dans les cadavres jusqu'au cou; son humeur n'en est pas égayée.*" Manon, however, grew to like him very much, and he became to her "*le petit frère,*" "*le fidèle Achate.*" She was destined to see a great deal of him during her married life, but unlike Bosc, he deserted her when the bad days came.

The weeks flew by quickly for Manon, since, as she said, "to be busy is to be half happy," but they were overcast by fears of Roland's death. His digestion seemed to get worse and worse; it was obvious he could not go on working for ever, so in September the Intendants of Commerce let him go on a holiday to his home in the Beaujolais. It was the first long journey Manon had ever made, and the roasting days and nights in the Châlons coach seemed very tiring. From Châlons they were fortunately able to travel in a "water diligence" to Lyons, where they did four days' sight-seeing before going on to the Maison Roland at Villefranche, thirty kilometres away.

Villefranche was a dignified little town still enclosed by old walls and towers, and containing

the beautiful Collegiate Church of Notre Dame du Marais, with its slender spire and elaborate Gothic façade. Close to the church stood the Maison Roland, a roomy sixteenth-century building,<sup>1</sup> with a garden running down to the ramparts, a courtyard with a well and a charming exterior stone stairway of the date of Henry iv. The iron-work of the windows and locks was elegant, and the panelling of the dining-room in the style of Louis xv. Madame Mère and her eldest son, the Canon Dominic, lived on the first floor—to which one gained access by the open spiral staircase—and rooms on the second floor were prepared for M. and Madame Roland.

There were five brothers Roland altogether; two of them were Benedictines of the Order of Cluny, living in or near Paris, and two others were priests, living at home and working in Villefranche. It had been rather a shock to them all when the only marriageable member of the family had selected a craftsman's daughter as his wife; but they did not let any feeling of this kind interfere with their welcome of Manon when she did appear. Nothing could have been kinder than Madame Mère and her two sons. Old Madame Roland was a sprightly person of eighty-four, much given to the pleasures of the table and to continual entertaining, and she looked forward to giving many pleasant parties in her daughter-in-law's honour. Notwithstanding the kindness of their welcome to the family home, Manon and her husband took the first chance of getting off by

<sup>1</sup> Grande-Rue No. 181, at the angle of the street Saint Claire, still standing.

themselves to the farm at Clos to have a real honeymoon. There they idled in lovely weather, and Manon began to realise that "enjoyment" takes up all one's time and gives more happiness than work. Clos is about five miles from Villefranche; it stands in undulating country covered with vineyards, and the little hill town of Theizé with its church dominates the landscape. The rustic manor-house in the valley has plenty of outbuildings and a few good spacious rooms. A chapel stands in its sheltered garden, and, if one pleases, one may walk into the adjoining meadow and see the Saone Valley with its wide horizons.

The Rolands spent a very happy autumn there, and returned to Paris in December, and there on the last day of the year 1780 Roland signed a contract with Panckoucke, the publisher, which bound him and his wife over to slavery for the rest of their joint lives. In this contract Roland agreed to edit and write articles for the *Dictionnaire des Manufactures, Arts et Métiers*, which was a subdivision of the new edition of Diderot's and d'Alembert's great Encyclopædia. The old edition had been in alphabetical order, and even with the assistance of the subject-index published in 1780 was very difficult to use. Hardly had this index appeared when Panckoucke, the forerunner of the great publishers of to-day, determined to reset the whole Encyclopædia by order of subject, and incidentally to bring all the articles up to date.<sup>1</sup> Panckoucke was a delightful optimist and man of

<sup>1</sup> This work was completed in 1832 by Panckoucke's colleague Agassiz, 166 vols. in 4to and 51 vols. of illustrations.

letters, the proprietor of the *Mercure de France* and other journals, and his house in Paris was the meeting-ground for men of letters and science and the home of new ideas.

By the agreement Roland was to receive the sum of three francs a page for his work, which was to consist of two quarto volumes. The total remuneration must have amounted to between four and five thousand francs. Owing to his greater reputation in 1785 he was able to make the much better terms of nine francs a page for the third volume, which occupied him till 1791.<sup>1</sup> Needless to say, Manon worked as hard as her husband at the Dictionary, which henceforth forms the perpetual background of their conversation, their thoughts, their letters, their lives in fact. No matter where they are they have to work at it—at Amiens, Clos, Lyons, Paris; from New Year's Eve 1780, no place, no hour, is free from the shadow of the great Dictionary.

Two days after the signing of this agreement Roland went back to work, and Manon set out for Rouen to stay with some old friends of her husband's, the Demoiselles Malortie. Little did she guess as she got out of the postchaise at the door of the rue aux Ours that twelve years later that house was destined to protect and conceal Roland, the ex-Minister, from the "justice" of the Paris Commune. Her two spinster hostesses were poor; indeed, they had to take in sewing, but they were very cultivated, and their house was the centre of a small intellectual circle known as "Les Grecs." Roland had once had a post in Rouen, and in far-

<sup>1</sup> Published 1792.

off days had been "a Greek," and engaged to the youngest of the Malortie sisters, to whose death-bed he had been summoned in 1773.

The business that took Manon to Rouen was the publication of her husband's *Lettres d'Italie*. Roland had made careful arrangements for their printing at Dieppe, but endless unforeseen trouble had cropped up over the censorship. Not only had the letters to pass the eye of the King's censor, but, since they dealt with foreign lands, the eye of the Foreign Office censor also. Manon did all in her power to get the book out, but it was not on sale till November 1781, and then it appeared without her husband's name. To the intense annoyance of the author, the censors appointed to deal with it had struck out whole passages regardless of context, and had even incorrectly altered geographical details. It is interesting to see the conditions under which a harmless book of travels appeared ten years before the Revolution. The chief condition imposed on the author by the authorities was that the volumes should not seem to be published in France, or by a Frenchman; so after passing the Royal and Foreign Office censorship, the book had to appear anonymously printed on special sheets with "The Rubric of Amsterdam," and be imported into France from Neufchatel, the little Prussian Principality that sheltered an important press. Roland got no credit or fame out of his work, and had the expense of carting the whole edition from Dieppe to Neufchatel and then back again into France. Early in January 1782 he was able to make "official distribution" of his book. It was badly received



by his chiefs and by the press, and, worst of all, it did not sell.<sup>1</sup>

While Manon was busying herself with the publication of this book at Rouen, Roland set to work to arrange their house at Amiens. His letters at this time are full of care for her, of pleasure at the prospect of a baby's arrival, and efforts to make his wife's rooms really comfortable. One February day he set out for Rouen to fetch her home.

The house he took her back to at Amiens was large and rather melancholy. It stood in the rue du Collège, and had a small garden, a *portecochère*, a courtyard and stable. The worst feature about it was that its back windows looked on to the cloister of St. Denys, which was used as a graveyard. Roland probably got the house very cheap because of the well-known unhealthiness of its situation, in consequence of which it had stood empty for years. It was simply furnished, but Roland's set of Piranesi engravings of Rome, his one or two marble antiques and his books gave it a little air of classic culture. Manon set herself to mind the house and garden methodically; she grew "haricots and flowers," looked after the vine that climbed in the courtyard, and alleges that she found it more agreeable "to kill caterpillars in the garden than to mix in the society of the town." One of the most serious worries were the numerous rats that tore about the house. "Perhaps we shall have to have a cat, a sad

<sup>1</sup> In 1784, 600 to 700 copies were left on Roland's hands.

In 1799 several hundreds of these volumes were for sale in Hamburg with the author's name attached.

expedient which I should only employ as a last resource."

At last the baby was born, and received the name of Eudora. She at once became an absorbing interest to her mother, who nursed her and watched over "illnesses and colics" with unremitting anxiety. It surprised her not a little to find that maternal love made everything, drugs, foods, and horrid minor ailments, interesting. Roland from time to time had to leave her on journeys of inspection, and Manon describes herself as writing, "crouched on a footstool, with Eudora asleep, holding on to her breast . . . cramped but happy." Madame Roland, as befitted a disciple of Rousseau, devoted herself "to the profession of *nourrice*." She became Eudora's slave; whenever the baby cried she was immediately and at all times nursed and, incidentally, spoilt. It certainly was difficult to a mother to let her baby cry, and yet how could it be trained without discipline? Manon puzzled the situation out, and came to the conclusion, as a good many other mothers have done, that it is a problem even to nurse a child properly. It seemed to involve a regular moral training, a discipline which a good many women were quite incapable of maintaining. Many, many hours were spent nursing Eudora, with a pocket edition of a book on political economy in one hand and the baby clasped in the other arm. In the intervals of covering jampots and doctoring the cook, Manon read Winckelmann or Tasso.

The miserable winter of 1781-2 proved very unhealthy to the dwellers in Amiens. They died

like flies, and day after day, from her dressing-room window, Manon saw graves being dug and filled in. It was terribly depressing. Sleet and snow and rain beat down upon the new brown mounds, day after day passed without her poking her nose out of doors. On Sundays, she tells us that "for the edification of her neighbours and the good of her soul," she went to the Collegiate Church, "to freeze feet which were extremely sensitive to cold and to the hardness of the pavement."

With the exception of a few weeks at Clos, the Rolands went nowhere for the first three years of their married life. Somehow, it often seems to happen in marriage that the essential and spiritual woman becomes overlaid with the duties and interests incidental to the state. After three years' experience Manon leapt into life again with a shout :

"Hurrah! I am better; all my tastes are renewed with the vivacity of the good days. I spent yesterday in reading poetry and making music. The débris of Sophocles, of Anacreon, of Sappho, and the other enchanters caused me a sweet intoxication. I embarked on the most brilliant chimeras of mythology, and I was ravished as on the first voyage. I begin to think that it is sometimes a good thing to be ill, those moments of languor which one looks upon as lost are those of regeneration, reparation, sleep; one wakes with new life."

Some of her spare time had been spent in chivvying Sophie Cannet into matrimony with an elderly officer, M. de Gomiecourt. This wedding had taken place in 1782, and in the summer of 1783 Madame Roland went to Sailly-le-Sec to

stay for a few days with her old friend. Country life, as she had persuaded Sophie, was most suited to the happiness of pure souls; and unadulterated country life was Sophie's lot till 1788, when her husband died.

Manon, in deference to Roland's wishes, had seen very little of the Cannets during her time at Amiens; he was always of a jealous disposition, and longed for her to concentrate all her affection and tenderness on him and him only; and so the friendship subsided for a time into a distant but amicable understanding which, later on, during the bad days in Paris, was to reappear with something of its old devotion.

The baby was stupid, there was no getting away from that; it played stupidly, and threw its ball about in an objectless sort of way. A dreadful fear came over Manon Roland that her Eudora was going to be a stupid woman; nothing more mortifying could be imagined. It was fortunate that a journey to Paris in March 1784, partaking of the nature of a mission, distracted her mind from these melancholy forecasts on Eudora's fate. Husband and child were left at home, while the wife, furnished with copies of the *Lettres d'Italie*, with which she hoped to pave her way into influential circles, went off to the capital to try and squeeze a patent of nobility out of Government officials. She lodged, as before, with her maid at the Hôtel de Lyon in the rue Saint Jacques, where Bosc and Lanthénas lived. Bosc was still working in the Post Office, and spending his leisure in the study of Natural Science, while Lanthénas was rather indolently

qualifying for a medical degree. These two men welcomed her warmly on arrival, and relieved the feeling of loneliness that had beset her on her journey. Paris felt very strange to her—"as strange as Pekin," she said. Since Roland had specially instructed her to make no effort to see her father or family there seemed to be no one except Sœur Sainte Agathe with whom she could renew old memories. The nun told her how dreadfully her father had felt her neglect of him since she married, and of the illness and death of her sprightly grandmother, Madame Phlipon. Manon consulted Sœur Sainte Agathe about the errand that had brought her to Paris, and confided to her that she did not know how or where to begin working. M. de Calonne, head of the Board of Trade, she understood, was all-powerful but unapproachable, his subordinates were difficult to get at, and she had heard that some of the Intendants did not care much about her poor husband. The first person who gave her any worldly advice was Madame de Belouze, a cousin of Roland's, and what she said gave Manon rather a shock. She told her plainly that Roland was supposed to do all work but his own, that he had written hectoring and unpleasant letters to his superiors, and that he had once or twice been within an ace of being cashiered. Madame de Belouze assured Manon that the only possible way in which Roland could obtain a title was by retiring; that they would be so glad to get rid of him at the Board of Trade that on this condition they would give him anything. It also appeared that the publication of the *Lettres d'Italie* had done Roland no good.



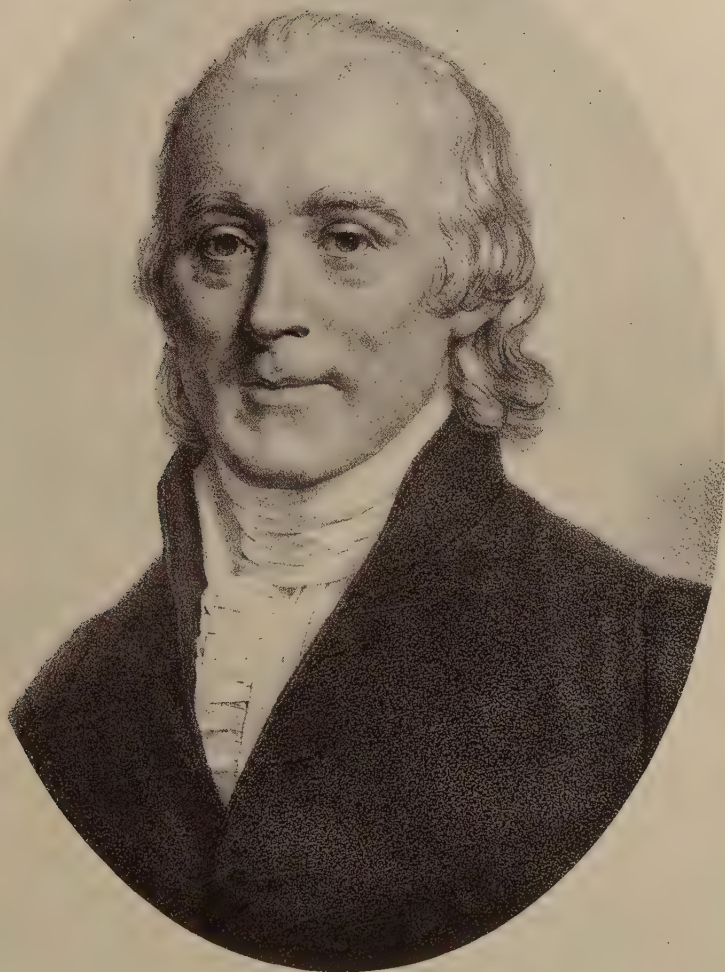
Fortunately for Manon, M. Flesselles, one of the principal manufacturers at Amiens, was also in Paris trying to secure the French Royal Patent for the Mill-jenny. He had to interview the very people Madame Roland wished to get at, and promised her his help. But when she found that a man like Flesselles, who had come to Paris on real business, was kept dangling in ante-chambers for hours, she felt that her own case was almost hopeless. Every one who wanted anything had to go to Versailles and ask for it. "Here I am soliciting and intriguing; it's a very stupid occupation; but I'm not doing it by halves, for that would be worse than useless." At Versailles she was politely handed from one person to another; no one helped her, as each and all were busy grinding their own axes. M. Flesselles, her "good angel," sometimes accompanied her on her patron-hunting expeditions. For instance, they went together to see M. Tolozan, one of the Intendants of Commerce, who might be expected to take an interest in Roland's case, as he came from Lyons.

Tolozan, who was in a nightcap when Madame Roland arrived, half rose to greet her, but did not look her in the face, and then, with a disagreeable expression, showed her a seat. She began to thank him for according her an interview, but he interrupted gruffly with the words, "What's it all about?" Hardly had she begun to set forth Roland's claims to merit when he testily exclaimed, "Take care not to present him to us as a superior person. It is his pretension to be so, but we are far from thinking him that." Tolozan

then went on to accuse Roland of pedantry and pride, said he was contrary in his ways, a bad writer, a bad politician, incapable of subordination—"and as for his work, many Inspectors who have published nothing send in memoirs of which we think quite as much as his."

In replying to this tirade she made play with Tolozan's statement that Roland "could not obey," and told him she thought it high praise, a good reason for promotion; to which Tolozan replied, "Ah no, his degree of capacity does not go so far as that; he is not good enough to order since he cannot obey." As for *Lettres de Noblesse*, he hoped she might get them, and with these words he again half rose from his seat. There was nothing for Madame Roland to do but smile amiably and come away. Some one advised her to visit Blondel, another of the Intendants. She did so, and he complained of the bitter tone of Roland's reports as Inspector, but, unlike Tolozan, was personally so agreeable that Madame Roland did not at all despair of getting her husband a good post away from Amiens. M. de Calonne objected, it appeared, to giving a mere civil servant a patent of nobility for a few years' work, and was not disposed to change his opinion on being told that it was no bestowal, but a renewal of nobility that was asked of him. Her mission seemed to lead to all sorts of subterfuges :

"When they ask why our family wishes to be ennobled, I do not scruple to pretend we expect an heir in a few months; this is considered very touching. They watch me walk, and I laugh to myself. If only we lived in



ROLAND DE LA PLATIÈRE

*From a portrait by Hesse*



Paris and had 15,000 livres a year, I could do anything. This chasing of ministers from Versailles to Paris is most maddening."

All Madame Roland's spare cash went in cab fares, there was hardly anything left for amusement or instruction. However, in leisure moments she managed to take an electrical course, read Lavater's *Physiognomy* and *Clarissa*, play the forte-piano, and go to operas and concerts with M. Bosc d'Antic, who had fallen head over ears in love with her. Roland was suffering pangs of jealousy at Amiens, for Bosc had written to tell him of his passion. He became so ill, in fact, that Manon decided to return home. Just before paying her farewell calls on the Intendants of Commerce she heard that the provincial Inspectors were to be shifted. Dropping all idea of a patent of nobility, she pulled herself together for a final effort and simply asked that Roland might be promoted to Lyons, because it was near his old home. The Intendants promptly agreed to this request, and appointed Roland forthwith to the Beaujolais with a salary of 4000 francs a year. They could not resist giving good advice to his wife as to his behaviour in his new post, and she, having gained her object, was able to accept it gaily and "to rejoice at the bizarrerie, the ineptitude of people in the administration." It was splendid to secure this move to Lyons, for not only was it the most important post of its kind in the kingdom, but it also might prove a very economical appointment, as the work, she thought, could be done from Villefranche and almost *en pantoufles*. With a light heart she went with Bosc, Lanthénas



and a party of friends to a farewell party in the Bois de Boulogne, where they ate new-laid eggs under the acacias and sang "La Fête des bonnes gens." On reflecting over the unexpected result of her patronage hunt, she could not help exclaiming, as so many others have done since her day, "*C'est une chose étrange que ce monde.*"

Roland was frankly delighted at being promoted to Lyons; and on hearing that his wife had been taken suddenly ill with "colic and fatigue" as a consequence of all her exertions on his behalf, he rushed off to Paris and took her to stay with his Benedictine brother at Crespy-en-Valois. When she was better they made an expedition together to Ermenonville. No cultivated person neglected this sentimental pilgrimage. Madame de Staël, Napoleon and many others have left us their impressions of the place. Rousseau's body, since it could not be laid in consecrated ground, had been buried on the Isle of Poplars in the lake at Ermenonville. Many persons, "inspired by sentiments worthy of the philosopher," walked meditatively round the lake during the fifteen years in which his corpse remained there. Later on,<sup>1</sup> when it was exhumed and buried with pomp at the Panthéon, Ermenonville lost its reputation and was no more haunted by worshippers of liberty and nature; but still a glamour clung to the place, for when the Allies invaded France in 1815 they exempted the village of Ermenonville from taxation out of respect for the memory of Rousseau.<sup>2</sup> The place made an unpleasant impression on Madame Roland; everything about it was gloomy

<sup>1</sup> 1794.

<sup>2</sup> *Œuvres de Rousseau*, vol. ii. p. 182 (edition of 1819).

—the water was thick, the ground boggy, the trees dark and overshadowing. There was nothing to impress the imagination save the sarcophagus on the island with the sentinel poplars standing round. The tomb at any rate was worthy of the great man, and she wrote to Bosc: “He is better placed now than ever he was in life; he was not made for an unworthy world.”

The travellers got back to Amiens early in June, and began making preparations for their voyage to England.

## CHAPTER IV

### JOURNEY TO ENGLAND

“Oh les Anglais, les Anglais sont bien étranges, on ne doit jamais prétendre à les connaître ; ils ne ressemblent en rien à tout ce qu'on a vu.”—*Correspondance*,  
MADAME DU DEFFAND.

LIKE Bonaparte, and every other cultured person of the time, Madame Roland had read Delolme's book on the British Constitution<sup>1</sup> through and through. In various letters to Sophie she alludes to it with admiration, saying that it had inspired her with understanding and love of England. This admiration of England and things English was common enough in France at the end of the eighteenth century, and any one pretending to education could read English books and was familiar with English history and English literature. The history of the seventeenth century<sup>2</sup> was especially studied, for the republican interlude which established the people's sovereignty was a very interesting precedent to young reformers, who were careful to note that once their authority was acknowledged the said people had gladly given their allegiance to a constitutional monarch. This happy English compromise between demo-

<sup>1</sup> *La Constitution de l'Angleterre.*

<sup>2</sup> *The History of England from James I. to the Accession of the House of Hanover*, by Catherine Sawbridge (Mrs. Macaulay), was widely read.

cratic and absolute government was attractive to some minds, but the more doctrinaire of French theorists preferred to flirt with the idea of a monarchical republic such as Mably had outlined. In the early days of the Revolution both these sets of ideas materialised in Feuillant and Girondin minds, but they resulted in no durable system of government. The sovereignty of the people in France was not destined to be lightly established.

Rousseau detested England and the English; most enlightened persons, however, did not share his prejudices, but admired everything *à l'anglaise*, from clothes to constitution. Some of the men whom the Revolution was to make famous had been in England and were saturated with English ideas. Brissot lived for two years in Brompton, "a little village outside London," well away from the fogs, and had worked there at journalism.<sup>1</sup> Danton stayed for a while in Wimpole Street. Marat, as a poor medical student, had lived in Edinburgh, Newcastle, Oxford and Dublin. Clavières, who was later on to be one of Roland's colleagues in the Girondin Ministry, endeavoured at one time to found a new and better Geneva near Waterford, and Roland, who already knew England fairly well, was now obliged, to his wife's great delight, once more to cross the dreaded Manche.

Madame Roland bought herself a "stout muslin dress" for London, as being more suitable than a silk one, packed up a few other clothes, and on the 1st of July 1784 left Amiens for Boulogne. Roland and his friend, Dr. Lanthénas, who was

<sup>1</sup> 1782-4 assub-editor of the *Courrier de l'Europe*: founder of Lycée de Londres, an association of Friends of Liberty and Truth.

travelling with them, went on ahead to prepare the way, and Madame Roland, escorted by her neighbour M. d'Eu, followed after. They embarked on a passenger barge on the Somme and so went to Abbeville; it was a cheap, slow and tiresome way of travelling, but in time it got them to Boulogne where they met Roland and Lanthénas. There the whole party boarded a vessel lying three-quarters of a mile from shore. Madame Roland, who had never seen the sea or been on a sea-going ship before, pronounced the vessel to be "a neat packet," and admired the comfort of the two cabins with their six beds. The captain was an old sea-dog who had taken eighty-six prizes in the last war, and had had a couple of fingers shot off; this fact seemed to impart a sense of adventure to the whole undertaking. The weather was propitious, it was "such as the gods grant in their serenity," and the beauty of the sky, the smoothness and brightness of the sea were so agreeable that the travellers fell into a reverie watching the lapping water. After a while Madame Roland went below and slept. An unadventurous night brought them to Dover at 2 a.m., after ten hours at sea—"an excellent, swift passage." The insignificant town and harbour of Dover was quite without interest, but the sheep on the Downs came in for a lot of attention; they were good "copy" for the great Dictionary. "Sheep of a small species stray on these hillocks, very different from ours, the legs short, the body compact, a great deal of wool even under the body, the head crowned with a ruff from which it seems to issue as from a cowl, and small ears thrown



back into this tuft of wool." The land of England was seen to be divided by quickset hedges, "whence result compartments which give to the whole the enchanting appearance of a vast and magnificent garden." There were flowers in front of the cottages and paths along roads for the convenience of people on foot. "It is evident that man, whatever he may be, is here reckoned something, and that a handful of rich people does not constitute the nation." Madame Roland was glad to find that a moral lesson was to be derived from most sight-seeing.

The first stage of the journey to London was Canterbury, "a town of 8000 to 10,000 people." The entrances to most of the houses were observed to consist of two pillars and a pediment—a classical arrangement of distinction and taste. As for the Cathedral, Madame Roland in her new rôle of deist was delighted with it, since "no image, no statue obscured the simple and sublime idea of a First Cause. Two books on the altar were the only ornaments." The bareness of the Cathedral seems to have impressed her more than Thomas à Becket's tomb, or the Black Prince's effigy, though she mentions both these historical monuments. Concrete things did not interest her as did moral abstractions and ideas.

The second stage of her drive through the rich country of Kent was accomplished in beautiful hazy weather. It terminated in "the united towns of Chatham, Rochester and Strood." Madame Roland describes "the semicircle formed by these towns on the Middle-way, a river that empties itself in the Thames after having formed at Chatham a very remarkable King's port." About

eighty vessels, frigates and ships of line, ready for service, were riding at anchor in this port, and the Rolands hired a dinghy and rowed about among them, but were not allowed on board. They begged to inspect a 74 gun ship, but their boatman told them they would be fired upon if they approached.

Naval buildings and barracks, masts of ships, quays and sailors made up a lively and interesting scene, amidst which the travellers dawdled happily enough. Late in the afternoon they landed on the left bank of the Thames and went a charming walk up river behind some powder magazines, in the vicinity of which they saw "sentinels of a Scotch regiment in their old native dress, a bonnet on the head, no breeches, but a piece of woollen cloth folded on the hips and falling short of the knees supplied their place ; another cloth chequered of different colours and resembling buskins surrounded the leg to the height of the calf, the knee and its adjacent parts are seen naked." This native costume delighted and astonished them as it has done many French people before and since their day.

At sunset they went back to "The Crown," a large, fashionable and clean inn whose owner talked a little French. Madame Roland, anxious to profit by the journey, "observed" many things, for example, that the vegetation was more vigorous than in France ; that hop grounds might be taken for vineyards ; that the graves of the English poor were made of withes on which turf was laid, making a long mound ; that women wore caps and hats over them, also sunbonnets,

also black stuff petticoats under a cotton gown, and a coloured kerchief round the shoulders.

She was determined to carry some new impressions away with her, and it was quite a relief when, after cataloguing sunbonnets and petticoats, her eyes suddenly discerned the dome of St. Paul's rising out of the mist. That gave them both a real emotion. Crossing the river at London Bridge they drove to a French house in Craven Street, Strand, and there deposited their luggage. After arranging to pay three shillings for their apartments and two shillings per head for each meal, they hurried out for a walk westward. Whether they were tired or not we do not know, but the first impression of London was disappointing. The walks of St. James's Park were certainly handsome, but the grass had been railed off, and one was obliged to walk on stony gravel, very disagreeable to the feet. They meandered past "that miserable, gloomy edifice" St. James's Palace, and then went back towards the Strand, stopping on their way to admire the statue of Charles I. which they thought a very fine monument, and which, later on, they were to deem the best in London. The Strand was found to be furnished with admirable pavements which guarded the walker from all carriage danger. London streets were such a contrast to the Paris streets, where people were continually knocked down by vehicles and often run over. The glass of the shop windows was quite a novelty to a Parisian, and though it was supposed to be necessitated by the sad inclemency of our climate, it was certainly beautiful and protected wares from every inconvenience.

St. Paul's Cathedral amazed them, its splendid proportions and style produced an overpowering impression ; it was undeniably better than anything they had in France. Foreigners always go the same round of sights in London, and the Rolands next day saw the Exchange, the Bank, the Mansion House and the Guildhall ; all these buildings came in for some notice, but the Bank of England seemed to them " a magnificent edifice and of such a kind that in it might be given entertainments which, from the beauties of the building alone, would be far superior to our Coliseum and other trumperies of that sort." Then they visited the Temple Church and spent the last hours of a hot day on the Thames " in one of the hundred cockle-shells so deftly managed by the watermen."

Next morning they investigated " five Squares," which for some reason unknown greatly interested these intelligent travellers. " Growenor " Square was reported to be very large and " well groved," it was the most remarkable of all. An automaton chess-player stood on the pavement there, and to their great amusement Roland won a game from it.

They were provided with letters of introduction to Sir Joseph Banks, President of the Royal Society ; to M. Linguet, the champion of black slaves, and other less important dwellers in London. Sir Joseph Banks, one of the founders of the British Museum, had been round the world with Captain Cook and was quite a personage. Many of the members of the Royal Society were in the habit of breakfasting at his house in Soho Square. There they could see all kinds of English and

foreign newspapers, and his library was at the service of all. He talked much to the Rolands about Lavater and his recent book on Physiognomy, and introduced them to men who knew and appreciated Roland's own work for the great Dictionary. He advised them to visit the British Museum, which they did, and Madame Roland, true to her character, admired its origin more than its contents, for it was "not the result of royal beneficence but the gift of private persons." The building, she discovered, had been a palace of the Duke of Montagu, and it contained the private collections of Sir William Hamilton, Captain Cook, Sir Joseph Banks and others. What an example it was to French people of private generosity and devotion to the public good!

One morning they visited Chelsea Hospital and thence made their way by river to the Tower of London. In the Armoury at the Tower they saw representations in wax of all the Kings of England clad in complete armour and mounted on horses, also completely armoured. It amused them to see George II. fitted out in this way. From the Tower they were rowed in a boat down to Greenwich Hospital, which building she admired immensely. Among the multitudinous shipping of the Thames their wherry seemed like a blade of grass bearing a few ants.

The sights of London, as we have already said, never change, and in 1784 as to-day every foreigner went to Westminster Abbey. It pleased the Rolands to find that four Frenchmen—S. Evremond, Courayer, Casaubon and Chardin—had been buried there. The monuments to General



Wolfe, Sir Isaac Newton and Major André were admired, but very little was said about the actual building, which, being Gothic, they would not have admired. Their praise was reserved for Greenwich and St. Paul's, the splendid works of Wren.

On Sunday, Madame Roland ventured into one or two Protestant temples, and tells us that the congregation was made up of about a dozen women, and that as far as she could make out the service consisted in two priests, reading aloud alternately from books, one on either side of the altar. St. James's Park, where she went afterwards, was a great contrast to the churches; every one was gay and talkative, though the crowd was middle-class. The very few better born women who went there to drink new milk were always attended by footmen and "trailed their gowns." The apparent austerity of the English, as evidenced in their church services and company manners, stood in great contrast to the plays produced at their theatres. One evening they went to a theatre in the Haymarket; the play itself was free in tone, and both dialogue and action shocked the Rolands. "Never had they seen such lascivious kissing." When they came out of the theatre before the end of the play, they were told to beware of thieves, and so, for greater safety, they followed a watchman down the street towards the Strand. With his rattle and long white pole he presented "a curious spectacle" to Manon, and it comforted her more to see this humble personage walking down the dark street ahead of them than to know that "under the just laws of England thieves were

regularly executed in batches of ten or twelve at a time." In order to study English customs still further they spent an evening in the Vauxhall Gardens, but there the people were too polite and modest altogether, so, tired of the decorum, they went on to Sadler's Wells, where low little comic operas and music-hall turns were performed.

They visited Ranelagh, which, to their disappointment, they found was only fashionable between the hours of 11 p.m. and 3 a.m. They also went to Kensington, "a country seat belonging to the King," and to Somerset House, which sheltered the Academies of Art and Science. The courtyards of this building reminded Manon of the Louvre, and it gave her a feeling of romance to know that goods from the East Indies lay stored in its vaults along the river shore. Various excursions to places outside London were made: to the Duke of Devonshire's villa at Chiswick, for example, where they much admired the superb pictures and the formal, bestatued gardens; to Kew, which was far more beautiful than the *Jardin du Roi* in which she and M. Bosc had so often walked. They found the gardeners there most civil, and were delighted with the view from the summit of the Pagoda, which included a glimpse of Windsor Castle. Richmond, another royal residence, was found charming, and Hampton very attractive to all travellers to "whom the works or the name of Shakespeare are not indifferent." The "*clou*" of Hampton was Garrick's country house, which stood by the river with smooth lawns running down to the water's edge. In the garden was a circular temple with an Ionic peristyle, and

within this temple was a statue of Shakespeare. A clump of pines and cypresses completed the eighteenth-century picture. Mrs. Garrick still lived in this place, and Madame Roland thought it a thousand pities that she had not caused a similar temple to be erected in memory of her distinguished husband. The day spent in this way was enjoyed more than any other day in England; it was composed of just the right ingredients, a classical garden, communion with Nature, the worship of the great dead, a touch of sentimentality and vague, elevating thoughts and aspirations.

One exciting afternoon they went to the Parliament House—the day that the young Prime Minister, Mr. Pitt, introduced the *India Bill*. Madame Roland was told that the point of the Bill was to take absolute power away from the East India Company and vest it in the Crown. It seemed that the Company had frequently abused their power by making peace or war without reference to the home Government. Mr. Fox proposed that a Commission should be appointed for the management of Indian affairs. The question occupied all English minds at the moment, but, naturally enough, Madame Roland, in spite of her theoretical interest in Caribbees and Hindoos, did not find it very interesting. They were quite glad to get out of the House of Commons and walk across St. James's Park to Mr. Townley's house,<sup>1</sup> to see his beautiful collections of classical antiquities. Mr. Townley<sup>2</sup> was a great amateur of

<sup>1</sup> Site of Queen Anne's Mansions.

<sup>2</sup> 1737–1805. Rival collector to Sir W. Hamilton. At his death his collection was bought for the British Museum.

sculpture, and owned the well-known bust "Clytie" which he always alluded to as "my wife." He caused this bust and the almost equally well-known heads of Pericles and Homer to be engraved upon his visiting card, and it became the fashion in many country houses to have reproductions of all three antiques. In many ways Mr. Townley was an eccentric, but he was very good about allowing strangers to visit his house, and it had become one of the regular sights of the town to strangers of culture.

Before leaving London the Rolands dined with M. Linguet,<sup>1</sup> a political free lance who had been obliged to leave his own country. Manon found him to be a mild person of easy and agreeable conversation, but "thin and ugly, with little eyes sunk in the head and sharp like those of an elephant." Madame Roland met no ladies at his house, and understood that it was to be accounted for by the fact that nice women refused to be entertained by the mistress—Madame Buttet, who presided at his table.

The weeks in England went all too soon, and just before leaving, Madame Roland feeling perhaps that she had not derived enough instruction from her tour, jotted down a few more observations, such as the fact that in England children are washed from head to foot every day, and seem none the worse for it; that knives and forks are left on the plate and changed during a meal as often as the plate; that it is usual to remove the

<sup>1</sup> Author of *Mémoires sur La Bastille*, London, 1783. A lawyer and journalist holding advanced views about the emancipation of slaves, guillotined 1794.

cloth from the dinner-table after dinner and to sit round "a naked table" of valuable wood.

"Meeting a man with a coffin on his back gave me occasion to remark the singular luxury of the English in this way. Coffins are made of good wood and covered with cloth ornamented with nails and brass or silver plates, and often they are lined with lead." With sentimental regret in her heart and a jumble of information in her mind, Madame Roland drove to Dover and embarked in the midst of a thunderstorm for her native land. The visit to England had been an unqualified success.

On reaching home they began to prepare to move to Lyons. Though they felt no particular regret at leaving their big depressing house, the miseries of a move are always the same, and we can spare a moment of sympathy for Manon, who, in her *cabinet delabré* amidst the desolation of packing cases, trunks and parcels, still composed letters. With one knee on a chair, one foot on the ground, and her arms on a bureau, "which is no longer hers," she writes Bosc a last letter from Amiens because "it is sweet to her to mark all the epochs of her life by a particular consecration to friendship." When the packing was complete they bought a travelling carriage and stowed themselves and their personal luggage into it. Hardly had they driven a few yards when one of the supports broke in two, and they were delayed starting till a locksmith could put it right. Every one hoped it was not a bad omen. By the first week in October they were settled at Clos, which they had great hopes that Canon Roland would make over to them for their very



own. But as he made no sign of doing this, they decided to make the family house at Villefranche their headquarters for the winter, and there to await eventualities. Roland travelled about inspecting his new district till Christmas time, and Manon had to live as best she could with her old mother-in-law and her two brothers-in-law. The second floor was given over to her to do as she pleased with, but as her pictures and books had not arrived from Amiens, the rooms seemed unhomely, so she devoted her leisure to becoming a real *femme de ménage*. Madame Mère had not concerned herself with housekeeping for ages, and everything wanted supervision.

The days passed monotonously enough. After *petit déjeuner* Manon ordered the food, saw to the cooking, the linen, the fruit, the wine, and then, when household toils were over, she worked at the Dictionary till dinner-time, for which meal she had to be "dressed," as her mother-in-law usually entertained guests. After dinner it was their habit to sit together for a short time and talk, and then Manon was free to go back to her cabinet to read and write. In the late evening the Canon joined her, and they read the newspapers or the works of Rousseau aloud, and sometimes men came in and discussed the events of the day. If Manon did not happen to be the person who was reading aloud she "modestly sewed" or kept the child quiet. Her husband appeared from time to time between his tours of inspection, but nothing else disturbed the even tenor of life at Villefranche—not that he really disturbed the family life, he merely fell into its routine. Madame

Roland went out rarely in the winter, paid no visits, save such as were absolutely necessary, and devoted herself to her child and to working at articles for the great Dictionary. She made futile efforts "to discover the heart" of Madame Mère, who seemed to her "a fantastic sort of egoist." Like many old people she was suspicious and jealous, and fancied she was kept out of things, and so tried to maintain her position by perpetual fault-finding.

Manon found the unending dinner-giving, *les éternelles mangeailles*, which formed the old lady's principal diversion, very tiresome, not because she was unsociable, but because the local society of Villefranche was so dreadfully dull. As she looked over the heads of these provincial folk to the wider and more cultivated regions of Lyons and Paris, she involuntarily compared the *canaille caladoise* with Bosc and Lanthénas and Flesselles, who had accustomed her to better talk than could ever be heard at Villefranche. However, she had to play her part with such grace as she could muster, provide food for Madame Mère and her friends and help to entertain the boring and too frequent guests. Whenever a special banquet was to be given, Roland had to do the catering for it in Lyons. Here is a typical order from his wife on the subject :

one good leveret,  
two good eels of  $1\frac{1}{2}$  lb. to go with it in a terrine,  
one dozen snipe for the second terrine,  
three good pigeons or wild ducks for the roast,  
fifty crayfish for an entremet,  
some fresh black truffles.

These things Roland duly collected and brought home, and though it is difficult to imagine how a dish composed of hare and eel together would taste, there is no doubt that Madame Mère spared no expense in feeding her friends.

As Manon took very little trouble to conceal her contempt for the guests she helped to entertain, she became very unpopular, and it is said that many houses were closed to her on account of the caustic things she said about people in Villefranche.<sup>1</sup> Later on, when it became possible to persecute individuals for their political opinions, Madame Roland was well paid out for her unfriendliness.

The fact, of course, was that she felt very cramped intellectually; there was no one in Villefranche to whom she could speak her mind, no one with whom she could discuss deism, or liberty, or religion, or any of the political theories that floated through her head. Both her brothers-in-law were very pious in a conventional way, and it would have shocked them unspeakably to know her views on revealed religion. In order not to wound the Canon's feelings she elected to behave "as the mother of a family should do in the provinces—that is, edify all the world," and she could impress the poor Canon so easily, for, having a good memory, she was able to repeat whole chapters of Scripture and parts of the Office by heart. In order to please him she even joined with another local lady in collecting the offertory in the Collegiate Church at Easter. This was a

<sup>1</sup> *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de la Ville de Lyon pendant la Révolution*, 1824, vol. i. pp. 55–60.

great occasion in Villefranche, and Roland was ordered to find suitable chiffons in Lyons, so that his wife should do credit to the Canon and the rest of the family by being well dressed. Fortunately the *plumet* selected by Roland was highly approved of by the Canon, who was able to watch his elegant sister-in-law moving about in the crowded church collecting alms with great satisfaction. She was, as he assured her afterwards, "the magnet for all eyes."

Save for two fortnights in Lyons and two months at Clos, Madame Roland spent the year 1785 at Villefranche, maintaining a vigorous correspondence with Bosc, which interested her immensely, for it kept her in touch with the world of letters and science, and gave her news of what was being said and done in Paris. It is through this correspondence with Bosc that we know her best at this time. Her letters are intimate, and ramble over a great deal of ground: they chronicle Eudora's stupidity, the outbreak of measles and small-pox at Villefranche, her own difficulty in getting books, her opinion of Necker, whose memoirs had just been published: they describe the *petits bourgeois* of the town who give dinners "better than those you can eat in Paris," the elegant toilettes, the gambling and the complete absence of intellectual interests in provincial society. Sometimes she has to admit enjoying a dinner of *chanoinesses* and officers; but for the most part she is the victim of ennui, and these letters, in which everything is set down as it occurs, were almost her only outlet at the time. She could at least be honest with Bosc, but even writing to him did

not altogether allay her "dreadful hunger for the good things that hinder one from rusting."

The arrival of her engravings, books and vases from Amiens made a little difference to her surroundings and her occupations, but taking all in all life was very, very dull at Villefranche—a school of all the virtues.

Just before the end of the year Roland was due to deliver a set oration before the Academy of Lyons, of which he had just been elected a member. His wife, now that she had her books, was able to help him with its composition. It was entitled *De l'Influence des Lettres dans les Provinces, comparée à leur influence dans les capitales*,<sup>1</sup> a subject which she could illuminate in the light of recent experience. On the day of the lecture she went into Lyons to hear Roland roll out her carefully composed phrases and periods, and came home quite delighted and puffed up with pride at the way in which the oration had been received.

The multiplication and activity of provincial Academies were quite a feature of eighteenth-century life. Five or six Academies dated from the seventeenth century, but later every province had its own, and between 1703 and 1784 twenty sprang into existence. At first they were no more than private literary societies, but they soon extended their sphere and included Science, Art, Economics and even Agriculture in their purview. Some of them set up classes of instruction in medicine, mathematics, astronomy and chemistry.

<sup>1</sup> This discourse was first read at an informal sitting of the same Academy under the title "Sur l'avantage des lettres et des arts relativement au Bonheur pour ceux qui les cultivent et de leur influence sur les mœurs."



In fact they supplemented the Universities, which were strangled in the coils of clericalism.

Roland longed to be a member of as many Academies as possible, not altogether for the distinction they conferred, but because they opened the door to new intellectual relationships, as members corresponded vigorously amongst themselves, and formed a far more vital organism than similar bodies do to-day. Roland was already a member of the Economic Society of Berne and of the Academies of Dijon, Turin and his native town. The Academy of Amiens had refused to admit him to membership after twenty years' residence in the city, because of his unpopular views on freedom of trade and labour. Later on, when he became famous, he was elected to several English and American Academies; but no ultimate distinction of this kind ever gave him or Manon the same pleasure and elation as the admission to the Academy at Lyons had done. First successes are always sweetest.

## CHAPTER V

### LIFE IN THE BEAUJOLAIS

“Tant que nous aurons des livres, nous ne nous pendrons pas. Je plains ceux qui n'aiment point à lire.”

“Vivre avec des livres au milieu des arbres et des fleurs, qu'est-ce qu'il y a de mieux au monde ?”

*Lettres, MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ.*

THE quiet life went on at Villefranche through the first months of 1786. Little Eudora somehow did not thrive there. She took a great dislike to her grandmother for one thing, and got so thin and fretful that there was nothing for it but to take her out to live at the farm ; so one May day Madame Roland set off for Clos on horseback, with the child in a donkey pannier by her side. Fleury the maid followed with the luggage in a bullock-cart. Madame Mère watched the procession move away from the door with tearful eyes ; she was too old to go, and it was dreadful for her to be left behind. Her daughter-in-law, however, was soon able to write and tell her how Eudora's spirits had come back with outdoor life, how she rolled in the clover and played amongst the flowers, “those sweet wild flowers” of which she seemed, in her mother's eyes, “the elder sister.” The pictures Madame Roland gives of life at Clos are charming and gay. She played a great deal with her child, read to her, and taught her the names of the flowers and grasses.

Rousseau had made popular “the sweet and

amiable study of herborisation," and under his guidance many people had begun making collections of dried plants. His book, *Letters on Botany*, seemed to appeal to every one, nothing was more fashionable at the moment than "to herborise," and many people like Madame Roland derived great pleasure from the pursuit. Even in Amiens she had been able to make a collection of flowers, and she had a great advantage over the master in that her eyesight was good. Poor Rousseau, being as short-sighted as Dr. Johnson, had to creep about on the ground when hunting for mosses or other low-growing little plants, but no pains were too great to take when he was securing new specimens. Madame Roland also spared herself no pains in her herborising hunts, and in the Beaujolais the chances of finding rare plants were much greater than at Amiens, for Mont Pilate, one of Rousseau's own hunting-grounds, was not so many miles away and afforded "excellent sport."<sup>1</sup> Flower hunting was such an education for Eudora too, funny little Eudora who was so flighty and would not learn; it taught "this naughty tomboy with chestnut curls" at any rate to see and to discriminate. From time to time their rustic pursuits were interrupted by a visit from the Canon, and when he came he always said Mass for his sister-in-law in the chapel at the end of the garden. Close to this chapel was a cherry-tree, in which, to Eudora's delight, her mother found a linnet's nest. It was under this

<sup>1</sup> Rousseau talks of finding there, "doronic, bistorie, napol, thymelia, raisin d'ours, onagra (oenothera biennis), souchus alpinus, lichen islandicus" (*Œuvres de Rousseau*, vol. xx. pp. 195-9).

tree, the only one in the garden, now so shaded by great trees, that Madame Roland sat reading poetry and romances—Ariosto, Thomson, Metastasio. More serious books were reserved for reading indoors, where she continually sharpened her mind with political and historical works, such as *L'Esprit des Lois*, *Le Contrat Social*, *La Constitution de l'Angleterre*. When the Canon did not come to say Mass on Sundays and feast days, Madame Roland had to climb “the mountain” to Theizé, at least 300 feet above Clos. Since she was a very poor walker she found the road to the village church very tiring. One day she decided to ride the donkey, and amused herself and Eudora by caparisoning the beast in a green serge tablecloth trimmed with yellow fringe, which was bound on its back with some strips of red ticking from a bed. Then, climbing on to a step, Madame carefully put a leg across the donkey’s back, and behold, she was mounted and ready for church! All went well till the animal started. “Owing to the tablecloth and the lining of my *caleçon* I could sit smilingly upon its spine so long as the ass stood, but when it walked and I gripped my knees together, I could feel its anatomy with another part of me than my hand—such riding is for others.” She had the ass fitted for a saddle, however, after this adventure, and rode it everywhere. Her delight in having discovered so safe a means of locomotion was expressed in verse :

“Je garderai mon petit animal,  
Doux au monter, doux au descendre,  
Bien plus mignon que Bucéphale,  
Digne en tout de son Alexandre.”

Days and days were spent idling in the fields ; such idling seemed better than anything in life, and a flower of more interest than the lessons of the wise—but all summers end. Winter found them once more imprisoned in Villefranche, and working at the interminable task of the Dictionary. Copy, copy, copy, day after day Madame Roland did nothing else ; it was mental degradation to have to do such work—drudgery of the worst kind, but it made her fly with greater zest than ever to Ariosto and Julie for recreation, and even inspired her to write verses to Iris. Life was extremely monotonous for this vivacious woman, and her letters to Bosc make us realise that she saw no future for either herself or her husband save such as they could make for themselves in the quiet pursuits of country life. By comparison with Villefranche, Clos was a paradise. In the town she felt desperately shut in, and everything within her seemed stifled except the instinct that she must prepare herself for something unknown. Just as when she was a girl she had felt that frivolity and flirtation were not right for her, though they might be right for others : as a woman she felt the same inner compulsion to educate herself, to perfect the weapon of her mind. And it must have been this secret conviction of a public destiny which, in spite of all monotonous drudgery, made her persevere. Could anything on the face of it be more unlikely than that a poor Inspector of Commerce in the Beaujolais and his middle-class little wife should ever be called on to perform a conspicuous rôle in front of all the world ? And yet this was to be—these obscure people, of



whom no one had ever heard, were to be lifted up on a high pinnacle of brief authority before being dashed into the eternal night. Would Madame Roland have done differently if she had had some sign to confirm her faith? Probably not, for she was doing all she knew to fit herself for the unknown future.

In the winter evenings at Villefranche husband and wife sat over the fire and discussed the republicanism of Rousseau as he presented it in his ideal town of Geneva, and learnt that he did not consider such a form of government to be applicable to a big state.<sup>1</sup> For the great state he saw no salvation but in the federal system.<sup>2</sup> Thus in their readings of the *Contrat Social* the Rolands learnt to believe in the dangerous and attractive political theory of federalism which was to prove their undoing in the great day. In their minds grew up the conviction that France might be converted into a federation of republics on the Genevan pattern, a federation wherein each province should preserve its individuality and its autonomy. Later on, when the terrible exigencies of the war of kings made it imperative for France to act as a whole, the Gironde still stood out for that equal association of republics which had seemed so fair a dream in peace time and which in a warless world may one day be recognised as the ideal of all government. The Gironde, the one party of the Great Revolution that commands our sympathy if not our admiration, went down because of the prematurity and unsuitability of its political doctrine before a party which insisted

<sup>1</sup> *Contrat Social*, liv. III. ch. viii.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* liv. III. ch. xv.

on centralised national government and stopped at no means to ensure it.

During the spring of 1787 the Rolands came into touch with two persons, Brissot and Clavières, who like themselves were destined to play a part in historic life. These two had just published a book explaining the bearing of the American Revolution on the situation in France. In it they had quoted the *Lettres d'Italie* and had given extracts from the Dictionary. They, so to speak, discovered Roland and praised him for his courageous patriotism, "his sane logic," "his energetic style," "here was indeed, in their opinion, a man who should be encouraged." About the time the book was published, Brissot wrote to Roland telling him what he had said of him, and offering him a copy of his work. The provincial author, who so far had not been spoilt by praise, was greatly pleased, and awaited the book in a simmer of excitement. The first intimations of celebrity are despised by very few authors, and Roland and his wife took much comfort from Brissot's kind words. The very fact that he had quoted extracts from the Dictionary made work at it for the moment more tolerable.

When the summer of 1787 came round Roland got permission to go for a holiday; it was three years since he had been to England, and he and his wife longed to go abroad once more. This time they went to Switzerland, taking Eudora and a brother-in-law with them. The excitement of a visit to Geneva, the native town of Rousseau, may be imagined, and yet here in the very streets he

had walked, the very town he had distinguished by his birth in its midst, Madame Roland found there was no statue to the benefactor of humanity! It was a great shock to her, and even a visit to Ferney did not wipe out this stain on the escutcheon of Geneva, though at Ferney they were privileged to find some traces of Voltaire—the church he had built to God, the sanctuary in which his heart was preserved, and his house *Les Délices*. Continuing their route round the lake, they came to Coppet, which had just been purchased by M. Necker, the Finance Minister; but it was interesting to them not on account of M. Necker or his famous daughter, but as the house which for two years had sheltered Bayle, the philosopher.<sup>1</sup> They passed through Lausanne with no vision of the little dapper Englishman who was working at his great history there, and drove on through Vevey and Clarens, steeped in memories of Julie and Saint Preux. Madame Roland noted that wherever they went they found a few English people, but in those days they do not seem to have attempted to scale the Alps, for she remarks that “the Jungfrau and other snow-covered mountains are inaccessible to every human being,” and adds that she herself was “unable to contemplate such sacred heights without emotion,” “merely to gaze on them was to silence all baser passions.”

In order to make nearer acquaintance with the beautiful valleys of the Alps, they bought long sticks with iron points and started out to walk to glaciers—glaciers that looked most

<sup>1</sup> He had been tutor there in the household of Count von Dohna.

tantalisingly near, and which proved most tiringly far. Madame Roland, as we know, was not a good walker, and was not sorry to take to the road again and drive by Lauterbrunnen, Grindelwald and Brienz to Lucerne. The covered bridges there were a novelty to her. She examined the dances of death and "suchlike whimsical allegories" as ornament them, and reported that in spite of "detestable restorations she could perceive the merit and fire of original composition" in these paintings!

The Lake of Zurich impressed her as both "beautiful and immense," but as for the Cathedral and its singular towers she can say nothing about them, for has she not just seen the celebrated Lavater, and is not everything else banished from her mind? His simple and engaging manners charmed her, "the expression of a great pure soul shone through his eyes," *but*, and it was a *big* but, he did not appreciate Rousseau or his works. He told her that vanity was the chief characteristic of woman, and that a woman who succeeded in conquering so essential a female passion would border on perfection. He was amiable enough to cut out silhouettes of his visitors,<sup>1</sup> and when they left he politely said, "You reconcile me to French travellers."

At Basle the party put up, as many thousand travellers have done since their day, at the *Trois Rois*; and like other travellers they went to see Holbein's "Dance of Death," and his portraits of Thomas More and Erasmus. From this city they journeyed back to Villefranche.

<sup>1</sup> Now in the possession of Mme. Marion of the Château de la Rosière.



The late summer and autumn of 1787 were spent on the farm. There was plenty to be done there, for besides the actual harvest and the vintage Madame Roland began to take a keen interest in the peasants of Boitteux, a neighbouring hamlet. With eyes opened by Rousseau, she suddenly saw the lives of the poor in all their grim, monotonous misery. It was something of a discovery, for in her day the poor were taken for granted. It was not considered unsatisfactory that one of the most luxurious and splendid of monarchical States should have its foundations in the mud-hovels and the slave labour of its poorest members. Grinding poverty had never then been thought of as a disease for which clear thinking and vigorous action might find the cure. It is almost with the consciousness of saying something original that Madame Roland writes : " We sometimes read and are moved by the descriptions of hardship in the lives of people removed from us by great distances, and we never reflect that our own peasants are a hundred times more miserable than Caribbees, Greenlanders or Hottentots. Death indeed is a relief to the one who dies and to those who surround him." She writes these words on coming from the death-bed of a woman of sixty who could quite well have been saved had she been treated in time, but " that is just what never happens." Most of the poor people, she found, suffered silently for months, and went on working till they dropped. Then lying down on their beds they drank a little brew of sour wine and sent for the priest to assist them in their agony, but never for a doctor; there was no money for



that. Poor, patient people, they died thanking God for taking them away from the rough life they had endured so uncomplainingly as being in some mysterious way His will. Eager to find any solution to the problems of poverty by which she found herself surrounded, Madame Roland seized on all ideas, books, opinions, that seemed in any way subversive of the existing social state. The *Res Publica*, the public concern, if it meant anything at all surely meant the giving to the poor a better life. Imbued with these notions, she became more and more revolutionary in sentiment and the open enemy of feudalism in whatever form it masqueraded. In a quadruple aristocracy of priests, nobles, merchants and lawyers, she felt there could be no hope for a people, especially for a people ignorant, timid, withering in chains and devoid of natural human pride.

The peasants were greatly touched by Madame Roland's interest and compassion; no one had ever cared about their material welfare before, and their benefactress began to feel that she would gladly live in the country always, just simply trying to help the very poor, for at any rate there were not too many of them at Boitteux to make it impossible for her to be good to all who were in need. "One can be useful here without being rich, and humane without great exertions." And yet in spite of her kindness to them the neighbours were not always kind to her—those from Theizé, for example, sometimes drove beasts by night into her fields to eat off her second crop of hay while it was lying on the ground, and there were

many other minor worries connected with working the farm. But correspondence and work for the Dictionary prevented her from brooding over such mischances, and helped her to keep a peaceful mind. To be busy *is* to be half happy after all.

From time to time guests came to Clos. Bosc often received invitations, and as an inducement to accept them he was told he could see Mont Blanc and Mont du Chat from the terrace, and then, since he was as keen a naturalist as she, that they could make excursions together to Mont Pilate and pick up shining yellow quartz and other attractive mineral specimens. It is just this very gaiety, serenity and love of simple pleasures that makes Madame Roland so human. There always remained something of the child in her. Her power of throwing herself into the things of the moment, of casting away serious preoccupations, is childlike. To Bosc she sometimes says: "I open no books and never write. I visit the stables with more interest than the most magnificent collections, and do domestic odds and ends without remembering there is such a thing as an Academy in the world." Bosc is always addressed as *mon père* and *mon ami*, and since his visits to the Botanic Gardens in Paris have given him a certain experience of plants and of insects, she sends him specimens of "some dreadful little black creatures" that are devouring her artichokes, in the hope that he may find something to destroy them.

To the "incomparable man" Lavater she wrote at this time an account of Clos, describing

it as "an antique heritage five leagues from Lyons," giving a most charming account of life there, of that work in the fields so sweet to some souls, in which they find "the golden mediocrity" of Horace, and in which "sentiment makes up for all that is otherwise lacking." The hills covered with vineyards, the great stretches of oak woods, the blue summits of the mountains of Dauphiné and the bright frozen crest of Mont Blanc crowning the perspective—could any disciple of Rousseau ask for more?

Hers was not the lot which Obermann considered the heritage of the greater number of men—"a suffering, a shifting, a yielding, a wishing for happiness." None could say of Madame Roland either in her life or in her death that hers was but "the story of the suffering majority of souls—a desolating history, a mysterious and uncompleted poem." She both suffered and enjoyed, and far more than that, her poem was completed in a strange, tragic, unexpected manner. Both the heights and the depths were to be disclosed to her astonished, ravished eyes before life ended.

There was no road to Clos in those days, and so in winter it was cut off from the outer world. Nevertheless, the Rolands were there a good deal during the winter of 1788-9. The weather was very bad; on many days the rain froze as it fell; on other days there were biting winds from the north-east. There was nothing to be done out of doors; in fact, as Madame Roland wrote to Bosc, it was "truly horrible weather." She amused herself by preparing the account of her Swiss



M<sup>ME</sup> ROLAND DE LA PLATIERE

*Veuve Marie Joseph Philipe*

Immolée par les factieux le 18. Novembre. 1793.

*From a drawing made with the Physionatrace*





journey for publication.<sup>1</sup> Having made for herself a rule not to write under her own name, "for a thousand good reasons derived both from principles and from taste," everything she published in newspapers appeared anonymously. She never broke this rule during her lifetime, but it is probable that the *Mémoires* written in gaol were intended by her to appear over her name, though the first edition was anonymous. Such written work as she did for her husband appeared with his signature.

Day after day during the winter of 1788-9 the Rolands sat over the fire in the living-room at Clos working at the Dictionary—the unchanging background of their lives and thoughts. Sometimes she is "up to the neck in furs," sometimes it was the question of tanning and drying skins that took up her attention, sometimes soaps, oils, pomades and grease. Sometimes she "pursues the great sea-slug of Kamschatka, whose habits are so very curious and of which Buffon knew absolutely nothing." She made as light of the drudgery as she could, but in her soul she rebelled, became restless and chafed under the yoke. She could not but feel that there was a great deal in her, that she could write and think and be a power in the world if only she were not condemned to provincial obscurity as Roland's secretary. Every day they lived shut up together at Clos he seemed to get more exacting and more tedious.

In February of the greatest year in history, 1789, the Rolands left Clos for Lyons. It was a

<sup>1</sup> Published anonymously, 1790, in Delandine's paper, the *Conservateur*,

relief to be able to breathe something other than Dictionary air, to meet people who were interested in other things than soap and slugs, and to be able to send intractable Eudora to a *pension* for a while. The keeper of this *pension* was a Protestant minister called Frossard, and he became a great friend of both the Rolands. In his way he was quite a little lion, for he had translated Blair's sermons into French, and held enlightened views about that then much canvassed question, the future of the black races.

Gradually as Madame Roland's horizon widened the sense of restriction and oppression vanished. She found herself opening up new intellectual relationships with strangers by means of the Academies<sup>1</sup> and the newly formed Philanthropic Societies. For example, her husband sent in a paper of her composing to the "Society of Emulation" of Bourg-en-Bresse on the subject of a Universal Language. The Rolands made out that English must be that language, whereas Rivarol in 1784 had prophesied that French would in the long-run be universally used. M. Varenne de Fénille, a landowner and arboriculturist, an active member of the Society, wrote to Roland disagreeing with his conclusion, whereupon Madame Roland replied in a long letter excusing herself for her "babillage," but saying that though she knew silence was the ornament of women, when it came to any question that concerned her good friends, the English, she must

<sup>1</sup> Roland was a member by this time of the Academies of Dijon, Marseilles, Berne, Bordeaux, Bath and Manchester, as well as of Lyons and Villefranche.

decidedly intervene. In this letter she stands up nobly for the English language ; of course it is difficult to pronounce and to learn, but what of that ? Look at the United States and its commercial future, look at the Literature of England. Has M. Fénille never read Locke, Newton, Milton, the amiable singer Thomson, sage and brilliant Pope, ingenuous Dryden, piquant Congreve, voluptuous Rochester ? Why has he never sought to know Shakespeare, for whom after the lapse of centuries the English are still so enthusiastic ? Why is it that he has had no curiosity to know on what the admiration, enchantment, transport of an enlightened nation was founded for an author who is careful to neglect the three unities, to make people die upon the stage, to mingle pictures of common life with the most exalted actions, just as Nature herself does ? Is it not strange that an author should have no other master, no other law, than his own genius ? . . . She begs M. Fénille to compare, if he is brave enough, the jealousy of Orosmane with that of Othello, the ghost in Ninus with that in Hamlet, she begs him look at Shakespeare's women—tender Cordelia, ingenuous Desdemona, unfortunate Ophelia.

Then the novels :

“ What is there in the world to compare with the English novels ? You will answer, ‘ *Julie*,’ and I shall reply, ‘ I read it once a year ; but I dare to say that in spite of all my respect and my love for that one among our authors to whom I give my preference . . . I dare to say that *Julie* is not admirable as a novel. It is only delicious for beauties strange, so to speak, to its nature,

and which because of their excellence alone do not seem out of place. Also, Rousseau was the first to admit that Richardson was his master. No people can present a novel capable of sustaining comparison with *Clarissa*; it is a masterpiece of genre—the model and despair of imitators.’ ”

Then after speaking of Fielding and the women writers, and the mass of poetry to be read, she winds up her long letter with a delightfully dutiful touch calculated to win the heart of any misogynist :

“ In spite of my taste for languages, my passion for literature, I like my husband better than these things, and as he works at crafts, I neither have known, seen, nor understood anything but crafts for several years, except by way of recreation and in his company. *À la dérobée* we make little escapades into the beautiful domain of literature, a domain to which I one day hope to return, forgetting all the crafts of the world, and in moments of what the English call ‘humour’ we shall together turn the pages of Montaigne.”

Besides these academic friends, they made others in the new world of journalism. One journalist in particular, Champagneux, eventually destined to be Eudora’s father-in-law, became a great friend of the Rolands at this time. To them he confided his plans for a new daily paper, *Le Courier de Lyon*, which he hoped to produce in the summer. Through him Madame Roland began to realise what possibilities political journalism offered for the influencing of events. Hitherto the Press in France had been gagged and censored to such a degree that it had no power. Ministers like Calonne had salaried scribblers by the score,

and in consequence received adulation and incense from the newspapers, but real organs, voicing real opinions, simply had not existed. Including provincial papers, such as those of Leyden, le Bas Rhin, Avignon, Amsterdam, Holland, only twenty were circulated in France before the Revolution. One of the first results of the fall of the Bastille was an eruption of newspapers such as had never been dreamt of in Europe till Brissot (who had discovered during his stay in America<sup>1</sup> what a part journalists could play in times of revolution) recrossed the Atlantic full of schemes and ideas for establishing a new power—the Press. Early in 1789 he was looking out for writers for *Le Patriote Français*, a newspaper he was preparing to launch. Having already secured the services of the Rolands' friends, Bosc and Lanthénas, it occurred to him to ask the Rolands themselves to be his Lyons correspondents. They took up the work in March 1789, little knowing how far from Lyons this simple step of working openly for "the public concern" was to draw them. The Prospectus of the paper announced its publication for the 10th of April, and everything, including Madame Roland's last newsletter from Lyons, was ready by that date. When the first number of the *Patriote* appeared, M. de Maissemy, the Censor whose official title was Director of the Library in Paris, immediately pounced on it as "the last word in audacity," and forbade the issue of future numbers. The staff, though cast

<sup>1</sup> Brissot went to America in 1788 on a financial mission for Clavières. He was deputed to confer with Congress with the view of arranging a loan for the French Government.



down by this check, was not without hope of greater liberty in the future. This hope was justified, for a fortnight after the fall of the Bastille the paper began to appear regularly.<sup>1</sup>

In times of great stress such as Revolution or War, books cease to be published. Nothing appears save ephemeral pamphlets on the actual situation, and on the possibilities opened up by current events. After the meeting of the States-General no new books came out, but since the era of political unrest brought journalism in its train, the most extraordinary number of newspapers made their appearance. More than a hundred journals were in circulation, as well as *Gazettes*, *Bulletins*, *Couriers*, *Feuilles*, *Annales*, *Chroniques*, *Postillons*, *Tribunes*, *Echos*, and they were advertised by a perfect horde of criers, creatures hitherto unknown in Paris.

Poor Roland fell ill in May, and was chained to bed in Lyons for ten or eleven weeks with abscesses in his legs. During the intervals of dressing wounds that would not heal, Madame Roland wrote many letters to Bosc. She had begun to take an immense and feverish interest in public affairs, and wanted to hear about everything that was happening in Paris. She was excited over Necker's dismissal;<sup>2</sup> the capture of the Bastille; the capitulation of the King—question after question was asked. Is it true that Flesselle and the Intendants Berthier and Foulon have been beheaded? Is it true that millions of pounds have been exported from the country? Cannot Bosc tell her news—the capital

<sup>1</sup> July 28, 1789.

<sup>2</sup> July 11.

must be teeming with news. No longer can she write to him of her personal affairs, because in times of crisis it is her opinion that "That person is a traitor who has any affairs other than those of the nation."

In their relation to the Revolution the people in the provinces were rather in the position of people in boxes at the opera in their relation to the stage. The illusion was good, whereas in Paris, the stage of the action, you could see into the wings, enter the green-rooms and watch the actors and their makes-up. It was more difficult to retain enthusiasm there.

Just at the end of July *la grande peur*<sup>1</sup> began that strange outbreak known as the *Jacquerie*; mysterious brigands had appeared from nowhere; country houses were reported to be in flames; wheatfields were set on fire. On hearing that several landowners round Villefranche had retired with supplies of food, arms and ammunition into their castles, Madame Roland set out for Clos to see that all was well there. Roland, being still confined to his bed, could not accompany her. Finding the villagers at Theizé and Boitteux quite friendly and the house quite safe, she went back after a few days to Lyons and wrote a cheerful letter to the *Patriote Français* to say that *la grande peur* had been much exaggerated.

Directly Roland was well enough to travel they moved into the country, but not before they had assisted at a great event in the Lyons world—the publication of the first number of their friend Champagneux's new daily paper, the

<sup>1</sup> Known in Lyons, July 25/26.

*Courrier de Lyon* or the *Résumé général des Révolutions de France*, a newspaper to which the Rolands promised to become occasional contributors. Champagneux intended to run it entirely for the public good, and any money derived from its sale was to be devoted to the Philanthropic Society of the town.<sup>1</sup>

At Clos and Villefranche the Rolands carried on the work of enlightening the people with regard to the events going forward in Paris. Madame Roland wrote to Bosc soon after her arrival: "I preach as much as I can. A surgeon and the curé of the village have already subscribed for Brissot's paper; we have given them a taste for it."

It was Brissot's paper, the *Patriote Français*, which kept them more or less in touch with public affairs, which gave them accounts of the meeting of the States-General, the fate of the Bastille, the oath of the Tennis Court, and the women's march on Versailles. From the first Madame Roland had no illusions; she did not believe in a combination of Revolution and King, as did so many reformers. She was always for the extreme and decisive solution, and later on when the chance came to her of influencing members of the Assembly and Ministers, she was insistent against compromise. From the first she put her finger on the centre of future trouble—the Austrian woman. Convinced that the Queen would end by tricking those who trusted her, she wrote: "French people are so easily won by the nice manner and appearance of their masters"; and

<sup>1</sup> La Maison Philanthropique, founded October 1789.

it annoyed her to know that half the Assembly was stupid enough to be moved by the spectacle of Marie Antoinette recommending her son to their care. “*Morbleu!*” as if it were the question of any child! It is the salvation of twenty million men that is at stake.” Few people looked as fearlessly into the future as this unknown little *bourgeoise* with her clear mind, her historical and political lore, and her faculty for essentials.

On the very day<sup>1</sup> the people fetched the King from Versailles to Paris and extracted his consent to Constitution and Declaration of Rights, she wrote a letter of advice to Bosc, outlining a policy. It seemed to her that those who by their position were precluded from any activity save reflection ought to spread their ideas, give them away, as it were, and this was her excuse to him for writing a long letter on the situation. She had information that troops had been summoned to Versailles, that a banquet had been given to the Flanders regiment by the King’s bodyguard, and she foresaw in these things the preparations for a *coup d’état*. She thought it probable that the Court would appear to remain inactive, until it was bolstered up with foreign troops, and therefore foreign troops should somehow be prevented entering the kingdom. Their most likely route, she suggested, would be through Flanders, but all frontiers should be watched. From the beginning, Madame Roland saw the Revolution’s worst enemy in the Austrian woman, and recommended that all couriers and dispatches from the Court at Versailles to Paris should be intercepted and examined,

<sup>1</sup> October 6.

as well as all Court correspondence to persons abroad. "Despotism is unmasked, and to meet it courage, arms, administration are necessary."

She gave it as her opinion that in order to counter the possibility of a *coup d'état* by the army and the Court, public funds should be seized and handed over to citizens capable of administering them, and this for two reasons—first, to cut off the supply of money to the Court, and second, to provide for the needs of the people. Then she suggested that a Committee of Ways and Means should be formed, so that the provinces might be linked up with the capital, and food supplies and transport be secured. It also seemed to her advisable that goods coming in to Paris should be freed from duty.

Once the provinces of France had been successfully linked up into a sort of Confederation, each province should raise a body of troops which might be used either for defensive purposes or by consent for the forwarding of some common national end. Thus in writing to Bosc did Madame Roland roughly sketch out the schemes which the Girondin Government tried to put into execution later on of a federated France defended by a Federal territorial army. At the back of her mind this dream had long been cherished, and it is obvious that the writer took pleasure in setting out her scheme on paper.

When everything had been reorganised, she advised that French troops, composed of men drawn from Paris and from the provinces, should go to Versailles to carry off the deputies and oblige them to sit in Paris under the charge



of the nation. "This coup would require to be well planned." Bodies of troops marching from the provinces should advance on Versailles from several points, for they may have to fight the royal troops. They must work in co-operation with well-trained soldiers from Paris, and yet, of course, the capital itself must be safeguarded by retaining within it a sufficiently large garrison to overcome possible rioting. Above all, they were not to risk any complication of starving mobs, for that would jeopardise the whole scheme; the food supply must be made absolutely safe, but once the nation has possessed itself of the public purse this should only be a matter of organisation.

As far as Madame Roland could judge from her provincial watch-tower, no great leader or organiser seemed yet to have risen up in Paris. Such times should surely have produced a man: there is so much to be done—a whole system of administration to be planned, a nation to be regenerated. She ends her long screed with the battle-cry: "May France awake and live! May man resume his ancient rights! May justice begin to reign! May one hear from one end of the Kingdom to the other but one universal cry, Life to the People and Death to the Tyrants!"

And one other small thing, a mere after-thought, occurs to her as she seals her letter—if theatres are still open, as she presumes they are, it is important that the plays given should have some bearing on public affairs, should promote sentiments and ideas proper to the circumstances. *Brutus*, *Catiline*, *The Death of Cæsar*, some of Corneille's great plays, would be suitable. Even

the little playhouses should be supervised, and everything suppressed that encouraged slackness, evil habits and ideas of slavery. By a little forethought, a little management, it might be possible to pave the way to great things, and nothing should be neglected when it is a question of regenerating a people.

To Madame Roland, who had read widely and was able to approach political problems in a spirit illuminated by a coherent and definite doctrine based on principles, the views of Bosc, Lanthénas, Camille Desmoulins, and other revolutionaries seemed ignorant and superficial, and she sometimes sadly writes, "You are nothing but children; even your enthusiasm is a fire of straw." Her wide reading and years of meditation had lifted her above the ruck of such empirical politicians as Robespierre, Marat and the many others who, during the coming years, were so to travesty the art of government. She foresaw that the Revolution might founder through chaotic thinking, and that it might even lead through anarchy to a yet more desperate despotism. And behind all her thinking and her writing flamed a great love of and ambition for her country. She and Roland had talked sometimes in the last months of going to America, but they no longer think with regret of this Land of Promise, for now they have the hope of a true *patria*. "Imperfect as the Revolution is, it has already changed the face of France; it has developed in it a character when it had none." "We should not deserve to have a country if we became at all indifferent to the public concern. By force of

banding ourselves together for the common interest, goodwill is spread abroad, ideas are propagated, opinion is solidified."

There is something extraordinarily fine about the quality of Madame Roland's patriotism. We know that patriotism is no easy word to define, and that for many people it merely means sentiment for a physical unity of men, a nation, and for many more sentiment for a geographical area or country. Vague devotions of this kind were not patriotism as Madame Roland knew it. For her real patriotism meant devotion to the French ideal, which she believed to be a unique ideal, a something towards which the whole French race was striving, a something for which every true Frenchman would shed the last drop of his blood, a something that made slaughter right in the interest of human civilisation. In Madame Roland we have the inspiration, the Muse of the Gironde, an inspiration that was to be voiced by Vergniaud later on in the well-worn words, "What does *life* matter to the representatives of the people when it is a question of the Country's salvation?" Never can it be too emphatically stated, too insistently pointed out that the early revolutionaries were free from personal ambition, contemptuous of gold and place, and devoted to that ideal of country they had set out to attain. Madame Roland's spirit is but typical of their spirit. In knowing her we know them.

In times of war and revolution a country calls many to serve her in ways undreamt of in days of peace. In 1790 the country, in the guise of the Municipality of Lyons, pointed a finger at Roland

indicating plainly that he should take practical interest in the public concern, and it is this year that marks the unassuming entry of both the Rolands—it is impossible to think of him without her—into political life.

The great tide of public affairs was slowly and relentlessly flowing into many houses this year, and it bore M. Roland de la Platière from the privacy of his flat in the Maison Chamburey to the contentious atmosphere of the Council General of the Commune of Lyons.<sup>1</sup> Once elected, he became leader of the most democratic section of the Council, and was the first person to move that sittings should be open to the public, that *octroi* duties should be reduced, and gradually replaced by a house tax. With the imperturbable and tactless equity which characterised all his public dealings he immediately denounced the mal-administration of municipal finance and so laid the foundation of lasting unpopularity.

His work on the Council admitted of occasional visits to Villefranche and Clos. Madame Roland spent more time in the country than he did, for somebody had to look after the garden and estate. She was there, for example, in May 1790: "A magic wand has touched the vines and hazels, a delicate green decorates the black sticks of winter. . . . Here I might forget public affairs and the disputes of men, for I am satisfied with putting the estate in order, with watching my broody hens, and looking after my rabbits. Soon I should cease to think of the revolutions of Empires.

<sup>1</sup> He was selected mainly on account of his *brochure*, *Municipalité de Lyons, aperçu des travaux à entreprendre et des moyens de les suivre*.

But directly I go to the town my hatred of injustice and oppression is awakened by the misery of the people and the insolence of the rich ; then indeed I have no ties, no interest but for the triumph of the great truths, and the success of our regeneration."

All this time she was working at the third volume of the Dictionary, which was advertised to appear shortly, but interrupted this drudgery very gladly in order to assist Champagneux in preparing the " beautiful feast of federation " on the 30th of May. It was with Champagneux that Madame Roland sallied forth at five in the morning of the great day to watch 60,000 national guards from the neighbouring departments marching along the quays beside the Rhone. It was in his newspaper that she published anonymously a glowing account of the feast. Sixty thousand copies of this pæan were printed, and each federal carried one away as a souvenir of the splendid parade. The *Patriote Français* gave extracts from it on 6th June, and the whole of it was reprinted by Camille Desmoulins in his paper, *Les Révolutions de France et de Brabant*. It was a journalistic triumph, and the anonymous author was spurred on to new efforts. To Madame Roland the sense of power coming after years of seclusion was almost intoxicating.

About this time she wrote a letter to Bancal des Issarts of the *Patriote Français*, whom she had never met, but of whom she had heard much from Bosc and Lanthénas. Her excuse for writing was that " the existence of a citizen is not limited to his vegetation in this or that spot," and that



“one need not know a person by sight in order to esteem him.” Not indeed that she needed any excuse, since he was so intimate a friend of her friends, and was also on Brissot’s staff, but she would like him to come and stay with them, and can promise him a warm welcome whenever he should choose to appear.

“Since French people have acquired a *patria*, a fatherland, a powerful new link has of necessity been formed between all those who are worthy of this good, a link which draws them together in spite of distance and unites them in a single cause. . . . No friend of the Revolution could be a stranger to any one of those who love this Revolution and desire to contribute to its full success.”

One day Bancal des Issarts responded to this invitation, arrived in Lyons, and went out to spend a night at Clos. Madame Roland found him delightfully sympathetic, and he fell completely under her charm. They had so much in common—love of reading, of flowers, of Rousseau, and above all, of their country and of the new ideals which were to remould it. They wrote to each other constantly after this meeting. Through Bancal Madame Roland heard some amusing accounts of the way in which light-hearted Parisians were preparing the great Feast of Federation in the capital. Nothing like it had ever been seen or thought of before. Everybody was helping to dig out the great amphitheatre on the Champs de Mars. Rumours reached the provinces that not only did monks, priests, shopkeepers, ladies and philosophers lend a hand, but each cavalier of the theatrical world offered a light pickaxe

ornamented with ribbons and flowers to some fair, frail lady and danced off with her to work. And since the white muslin frocks in vogue that summer were easily soiled by contact with the earth, it became fashionable to wear a costume of grey muslin, with grey shoes and stockings, a tricolour scarf and large straw hat. In this garb the cavalier and his lady filled their wheelbarrow with earth and trundled it over to the banks where it was required. Then the lady skipped inside and was wheeled back to dig again. It was looked upon as tremendous fun, though soon the authorities had to stop these amateurs from hindering the real workers. These and many other interesting details filtered slowly through to the provinces, where no such amusements rippled the calm surface of life. Madame Roland, interrupting her readings of Tasso and Thomson, wrote from her terrace in the golden evenings when Mont Blanc was catching the last rays of the sun, to answer the long screeds penned by Bancal in the noisy newspaper office in Paris, and to comment on the scraps of gossip that had reached her in other ways. The correspondents became very intimate, and through their letters we find that Manon is once more immersed in country life, hearing no noise but that of threshing corn and doing nothing but picking fruit and making jam. Bancal wishes to send her flowers for a garden of friendship, and she begs him to bear in mind the hard, dry nature of the soil at Clos. How little did either of them guess that the plants he sent would be neglected, that they would be allowed to riot or to die, with no eye to watch their beauty,

no hand to tend their growth! Madame Roland's gardening days were nearly done, and Bancal would never come to Clos again.

At the end of July there was an insurrection in Lyons, which Roland was accused of promoting. His proposal to reduce the *octroi* duties which were garrotting industry, and throwing many out of employment, had been adopted by the Council and sent up to the National Assembly to be ratified, but the National Assembly reversed the decision of the Council, and the people of Lyons at once mutinied. Roland had gone to the country before the rioting broke out, but still he was accused by his enemies of being the instigator of the disturbances. The scheme of course had been his, he had carried it through the Council, and he had also distributed a pamphlet in which the advantages of the proposal were demonstrated; but he was the last man in the world to stir up riots, and it was extremely vexing and humiliating to them both to be accused of doing such a thing. He answered all the charges made against him in an article in the *Courrier de Lyons*, and Brissot, directly he knew the facts of the case, was ready to defend him in the *Patriote*. Lyons was really a despairing place for a reformer to live in, and Madame Roland, smarting under the allegations made against her husband, wrote off to Brissot, whom she had not then met. The letter "grew from her like a mushroom." She could not write quietly when she was thinking quickly. "I am scratching like a cat," she said on this occasion, as she hastily assured Brissot that the people never act badly except through ignorance, and that their

interest is always just because it is the interest of the greatest number. Her whole letter is a plea for the townsmen of Lyons, who thought they had a right to manage their own affairs, and are in spontaneous and quite natural revolt against the decision of the Assembly in Paris. As for Roland and herself, they are quite independent, and fear nothing except behaving unworthily, and in this particular matter they cannot reproach themselves.

The attacks on Roland continued, and his wife came in for her share of abuse, and was accused of bribing and corrupting the people. It was wretched sitting at Clos and reading all the slanders and misrepresentations, though Madame Roland did not mind what was said about her so long as her husband was cleared. The rumours became so annoying that one day she rode off on her horse to Lyons and interviewed a young doctor of her acquaintance there, who told her what he could about the situation. Lyons it appeared was being "pacified," at any rate it seemed to be occupied by regiments from another province, and to her dismay Madame Roland saw the red flag—the sign of martial law—floating over the Hôtel de Ville. It looked to her very much like an aristocratic plot, a counter-revolution. The rioting had been so slight that it could easily have been settled by the National Guards, and it seemed to her a monstrous move to bring in troops from Vienne to disarm the citizens. She and her husband and Champagneux agreed that they were sick of Lyons and its reactionary ways. Since Roland's term of office as Inspector of

Commerce was nearly at an end, she urged him to resign the Council and leave Lyons altogether.

About this time extracts from the Declaration of Rights appeared constantly in the papers, and Madame Roland begged Bancal to send her "a complete copy of the charter of human liberty" from Paris, and was delighted when handkerchiefs arrived on which it was printed in full. It seemed to her a capital way of propagating sound doctrine. She also procured the *procès-verbal* of the sittings of '89, the reading of which she much enjoyed. "I love to retrace those great scenes, those sublime and solemn moments in which an indignant people breaks its chains and takes back its rights."

If one thing seemed to her more important than another at this time, it was the complete enfranchisement of the Press. Why, she wonders, cannot the Assembly come to an agreement about this question; <sup>1</sup> the Declaration of Rights, after all, had proclaimed the freedom of the Press, "save in cases determined by the law," and she knew that early in February 1790 an English Quaker, Robert Piggott, friend of Lanthénas, Brissot, Bancal (and probably instigated by them), had presented an address to the National Assembly on this very subject. Though at the time the address was much admired and printed for distribution, it was afterwards relegated to the limbo of pious resolutions.

Since it was not to her thinking permissible in times of stress to allow the mind to become enervated, Madame Roland read Tacitus every day,

<sup>1</sup> This came about, but not till April 16-17, 1796.



and it was Tacitus who in those terrible weeks in gaol was to keep her even-minded to the end. Plans for the future occupied a good many of her thoughts. It did not seem to her that either she, Roland or their friends were doing enough for "the public concern." Was there no better way to bring about the reign of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity, than editing censored newspapers and fighting conservative town councillors? Could she and her friends, with all their enthusiasm and desire for sacrifice, do no better than that? Madame Roland could not believe this to be so, and gradually in her correspondence with Bancal, Champagneux, Lanthénas, Bosc, Brissot, we find the idea being formulated of a confraternity of equals, in which all should collectively and triumphantly accomplish reforms in which the mere individual must fail.

Madame Roland, whose sentiment for her country was a moral passion, whose love of Republicanism—the public concern derived from Plutarch—was a passionate morality, felt that if only a small model of the perfect life could be lived out somewhere in the country, France might indeed be saved. Roland was most sympathetic, and wondered whether with this end in view it would not be easy to find and buy some beautiful old abbey, or convent, such as the nation was daily selling? He discussed the suitability of the big Benedictine abbey at Savigny, four leagues from Clos, which in his opinion was far enough from Lyons not to be tainted by aristocratic tendencies. Madame Roland thought Auvergne might be a pleasant district for their

purpose.<sup>1</sup> Wherever they settled they meant to cultivate the land as well as to philosophise, write, talk and read. The formulation of a policy to be set forth in a journal and the acquirement of a printing press to be consecrated to this object formed part of their scheme. Ambition of money or place was to be equally ruled out of all minds. Brissot, to whom, ever since his boyhood in La Beauce, the life of a cultivated farmer had seemed the sum of good, was peculiarly attracted by the vista opened up by Madame Roland. All her friends had visions of life in America such as Crèveœur had so recently described,<sup>2</sup> dreams of a rusticity in which the joyous cultivation of the soil was kept in its due place by the equally joyous cultivation of the mind. Bancal, who was practical and knew to how small a sum their united funds would amount, made overtures to Mr. Piggott, his Quaker friend, who was at that time in France, to join this Republican paradise. Mr. Piggott took great interest in the scheme, and if it had been carried into effect might have become a member of the community. Madame Roland anxiously assured Bancal that she did not consider it *necessary* to have perfect men in order to found the happiness of such an establishment. Indeed in some ways it would be absurd to try and impose such a condition, but she thought it well that each should at least know the others, so as to avoid surprises of character and behaviour, as on knowledge alone is it possible to found lasting tolerance. "Every situation has disadvantages as

<sup>1</sup> She offers 50,000 to 60,000 livres as their share of the expenditure.

<sup>2</sup> *Letters from an American Farmer*: 1783.

well as advantages, and in seeking the numberless advantages of such an association we impose fresh obligations and virtues upon ourselves, of a kind undemanded in isolated life."

In all ages idealists have been in love with the idea of common life. Whether it be the flat shores of the Zuyder Zee, the lush meadows of Virginia, or the mountain fastnesses of Asia that they have chosen as their ground of experiment, all have been convinced that by banding together they could create a gospel of regeneration, and make of the little white flames of idealism glowing within each individual breast such a conflagration as would burn away the dross and injustice of this uneven world, leaving behind the gold of freedom and aspiration. Experience has shown the changing of the world to come about in quite another way. Brook Farm and Castle Waltha have disappeared; the mountain monasteries of Asia brood over chasms only less empty of spirituality than the ritual that goes on behind their walls. Somehow the communal flame dies down and leaves a discouraging heap of white ashes. The great changings of the world are the fruits of the thoughts of lonely thinkers—the founder of a religion, the discoverer of a scientific truth, the originator of a great campaign. If one thinker more than another brought about the changes in France in 1789 and the succeeding years, it was the uncouth author of the *Contrat Social*. What we call the Revolution was at first the enthusiastic setting forth of his ideas by the young men and women of that day, and at the last the impatient putting into practice of those ideas by a thousand bloody hands.

The Rolands hugged their project of communal life and discussed it together and with their friends. One day they hoped it might become a fact, and in any case it was delightful to think of beautiful abbey buildings or romantic cloisters as the scene of idyllic labours. But projects, though they illumined, did not interrupt the business of existence.

Woven in with ideal and political interests daily life still went on at Clos; raisins had to be dried in the oven, nuts beaten down, pears and apples stored. In October the weather was good for sowing, and as Madame Roland watched the sower pacing the furrows, it seemed to her that their own solitary lives resembled the fields in their stillness and monotony. Autumn is the period in which we are most apt to ponder over the littleness and the want of purpose in our lives. The mills of nature grind up so slowly and so relentlessly all the things about us, the flowers, the fruits, the leaves, the beautiful days, and the year is but an image of man's life. What has happened to the flowers and the leaves will also happen to us. And as Madame Roland paced her terrace in October 1790 she did not know that exactly three more years of life were left to her—but she did know that if by any means she could help to free her fellow-man, and advance the cause of liberty, life would count as nothing in the balance. She saw the yellowing woods arrayed in the liveries of autumn, the silent fog invading the valleys, and standing on her terrace dreamt of what was to happen to her country.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE FIRST SALON

“Ce n'est point à l'expérience qu'on doit la pénétration. Quand on n'a pas de pénétration à quinze ans, on n'en a pas à soixante. Qu'est ce donc que la pénétration? C'est l'œil de l'esprit, l'esprit peut aller sans elle mais elle ne va point sans l'esprit.”—*Caractères*, MADAME DE PUISIEUX.

IN November 1790 a flutter of excitement was caused in his household by Roland's nomination as one of the sixteen Municipal Officers on to the Lyons Council.] The honour, Madame Roland felt, was well deserved and was but a slight recognition of her husband's personal merit and disinterested zeal for “the public concern.” It pleased her a good deal, as it was a distinct admission that the cause of liberty was gaining ground in the city. [Roland took his new appointment as he took everything else, seriously, and by Christmas time, when Manon joined him in Lyons, she found him almost worried to death. His sympathies being with the working man rather than the employer, it was a real distress to him that so many thousands of hands should be out of work and that the cost of living should be so high.

Lyons, as one of the most modern and progressive towns in France, and an important manufacturing centre, should have been the home of prosperity instead of the abode of starving work-people. In good days nearly 60,000 of its inhabitants were employed in making velvets, silk,



ribbons, gold lace, embroidery, gauzes and crêpes. The hat trade normally occupied another 8000 persons, and there were fifty houses engaged in the leather trade. And Lyons was not a manufacturing town only, it was also a vast warehouse and centre of trade distribution.

Roland was made intensely depressed and unhappy by the paralysis of trade in the autumn of 1790, and he realised with deep chagrin that the *octroi* duties which caused this paralysis could not be abolished or even lowered unless the municipal debt,<sup>1</sup> under which the whole administration staggered, could be nationalised. If only the debt were taken off their backs, the councillors might make Lyons a free or partially free town, industries would revive and increase rapidly, and the city might become an emporium for the whole Levant. There was nothing for the Council to do except send a mission to Paris to explain the situation and obtain financial relief. The only short cut to prosperity, Roland thought, lay in persuading the Government to take over the debt. Other suggestions could only be regarded as palliatives, not as remedies. After considerable discussion the Council decided to try this course and dispatched two of its members, Roland and Bret, to Paris to see what could be done.

Madame Roland, delighted at the decision, deposited Eudora directly she heard the news in a convent at Villefranche under the guardianship of her two uncles, then prepared to accompany her husband on his mission, and soon was ready with packed trunks to take the mail for the capital.

<sup>1</sup> 39,000,000 francs contracted mainly under the old régime.

It was more than six years since she had been in her native town, and had squandered her money and her time in driving to Versailles and waiting there in the antechambers of the King's Ministers. During her absence the old order of things had passed away. Royalty no longer counted for much, and a diminished and discredited Court lived as it were on sufferance at the Tuileries, contrasting its shabby existence with the splendours that had been. The tide of French life and power was flowing, as Madame Roland was soon to realise, in new channels. A national assembly, a national guard, political clubs, a municipality, all the machinery in short of free democratic life had come into being while she and her husband had been vegetating in the Provinces. No wonder that Roland's mission to Paris was such an intense delight and excitement to his wife, for did it not mean that at last she was going to see the people who were remaking France, and examine with her own eyes the changes they had already accomplished?

[Bosc had been charged by his friends to find suitable rooms for them. He offered to lend them his own apartment, but, as Madame Roland explained, "they were arriving *en bande*," and could not avail themselves of his kind offer. The *bande* consisted of six persons—M. and Madame Roland, their man and maid-servants, "*le petit frère*" Lanthénas and M. Bret, their colleague on the Corporation. Madame Roland was specially anxious to secure rooms in some accessible part of Paris, "nowhere near the rue Saint Jacques, which they had hitherto fre-

quented." The Faubourg Saint-Germain was indicated as a desirable locality, for it was "a place where a citizeness who knows how to use her legs can get about without wading in the mud." On reaching Paris, they found themselves conveniently lodged on the first floor of a furnished hotel,<sup>1</sup> close to the Assembly. Brissot, warned of their arrival, flew round immediately to pay his respects. We must remember that hitherto this editor had only known his Lyons correspondents on paper.] "After we had got over the first curiosity of seeing each other's masks (we had known each other's *minds* for some time) we talked like the oldest of friends," said Manon of the interview. Brissot proved delightfully kind, and lost no time in bringing his friends Pétion, Robespierre, Clavières and Buzot to call. In this informal, unpremeditated way Madame Roland, instead of being buried alive in the country, found herself as if by a miracle in the very centre of revolutionary ferment. The men who were doing things, who were changing the very fabric of society, actually came to her rooms, actually propounded their theories and schemes to her. It seemed too good to be true. Six years earlier, when she had been on her tiresome mission in Paris trying to get Roland a title, she had never heard of these people, and now they were making history—and more wonderful still, it was not impossible that she might help them in the making of history. Quite naturally, and without any scheming or contriving, it came about that Brissot's friends took to meeting on four evenings a week at the Rolands' rooms.

<sup>1</sup> Hôtel Britannique, rue Guénégaud.

Sometimes they brought colleagues with them to make acquaintance with their charming and enthusiastic hostess, sometimes they were content with talking to her old and less distinguished friends, Bosc and Lanthénas, who always took part in these gatherings. Madame Roland, who seems at this time to have been quite without vanity of appearance, attributes the inception of her *salon* to the facts that the Hôtel Britannique was so near the centre of things and that she herself was "such a stay-at-home person"—"such a ready listener."

During one of the first meetings of this little *salon*, Madame Roland tried to take stock of her guests. She watched Brissot talking, and noticed how his colourless face was, as it were, lit up by an animated manner. He was under middle height, slightly deformed, looked younger than his thirty-eight years, was very simply dressed in the fashion of an English Quaker, and was the only man in the room with unpowdered hair. She made a mental note of this, as it struck her that such a costume would well suit her grave husband. Brissot had been brought up under the shadow of the great cathedral at Chartres, and so had his tall, handsome, rather stupid friend Jérôme Pétion, who was destined later to be the idol of the Paris mob and to cause pangs of jealousy to the little blue-eyed deputy, Maximilien Robespierre, who stood beside him by Madame Roland's fire. For the moment they were great friends—men called them the two fingers of a hand—and were arranging autumn classes for the instruction of workmen's children in the real meaning of the Constitution. Madame



Roland discovered that the ambition of the dapper politician, M. Robespierre, was to be the spokesman of the poor and humble; it seemed to her a beautiful desire, and attracted her greatly to this curious young man. M. Clavières, another of Brissot's friends, struck her as an uninteresting, dried-up person—financial work must have withered his soul, she thought, for he seemed to have no enthusiasm left, and yet she heard he once upon a time had wished to found a community of idealists in Ireland. One face interested her more perhaps than the others, and that was the melancholy, romantic face of an as yet obscure deputy called Buzot. His face revealed to her an attractive personality, but a personality that still slumbered. The moment of revelation had not come to either of them. No one knew that this quiet, indolent member of the Committee of the Constitution and his agreeable hostess would be transformed by their mutual passion into a rapture of exaltation that carried them beyond the bounds of real life. The future held strange secrets for all the people gathered in that hotel room, but for none did it hold such a complete revelation of unearthly beauty as for Buzot and Madame Roland, and they died with the radiance of it in their eyes. They, at least, need no pity from us.

Conversation was brilliant and sustained at these evening gatherings. Everything in heaven and earth was discussed—political theories, schemes of social reorganisation, the issue of assignats, oratory at the Assembly, books, persons, foreign politics.] Madame Roland laid herself out for the rôle of listener; she said it was “suited to



her sex," and, anyway, it enabled her to indulge her taste for assisting at discussions and for appreciating men. She never or hardly ever intervened, and arranged that the guests should be grouped in an informal circle while she sat at a table at the far end of the room writing letters or doing needlework. But however engrossed she may have appeared, she never lost a word of what was being said, and often had "to bite her lips" to keep herself silent. Really, it was exasperating sometimes to hear people talking round and round a subject without coming to any conclusions. She longed to box the ears of these debaters, philosophers, politicians, and tell them that brilliant discussion was only justifiable if it found some practical expression in opinion. It was sometimes impossible for her to imagine that these creatures with their interminable talk could ever lead men, could ever influence an Assembly. She wondered whether her friend Bancal might not infuse a little backbone into the gathering, and wrote urging him to come back from holiday-making in England so that he might fight side by side with them; but he did not respond to her call as soon as she had hoped, and only returned to France in the early summer.

(Madame Roland had not been at all well when she arrived in Paris, but Dr. Lanthénas says that in spite of this she lost no time in rushing off to hear the parliamentary debates. The Constituent Assembly sat in the Salle de Manège, the riding school which had been built for the child Louis xv., along the north side of the Tuileries garden.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Along the present rue de Rivoli.

It took the newcomer some little time to find her way about the House and to become acquainted with the ways of members. The building itself was about ten times as long as its width, and was furnished with six tiers of seats forming an ellipse round a central space called *la Piste*. The *Piste* was provided with two china stoves of the shape of miniature Bastilles. Four ushers, dressed in black coats and knee-breeches, wearing silver chains of office and gilt swords, paced round it all the time the Assembly was sitting, crying out, "*Silence! En place!*" The President's table and chair were on a stage half-way down the south side of the building; beneath this stage was a round table at which sat the departmental secretaries elected by the Assembly. Opposite the Presidential chair, on the other side of the *Piste*, were the bar and tribune. At each end of the building were boxes for the privileged and galleries for the public; by this arrangement between five and six hundred people could be present at the debates. The first day that Madame Roland took her seat in one of the boxes for which a member had given her a voucher, she was confused by the noise and movement going on on the floor of the House. Groups of deputies, dressed in every variety of costume, stood about chattering in groups. Some one seemed to be speaking from the tribune, and from time to time the President rang his enormous bell and shouted, "*Silence! En place, Messieurs!*" Neither he nor the ushers seemed to have any effect on the noise and the movement below her. To Madame Roland's astonishment, no general attention was paid to

political speeches, and it was some time before she realised that the only things that really interested and amused the members of the Constituent Assembly were the deputations that from time to time appeared at the bar—sometimes it was a Latude, sometimes a band of negroes, sometimes an ex-priest like Burnett, trailing his family along the Piste, sometimes twin shepherd artists whom their department wished to make pupils of David. The general temper of the audience seemed to her rather frivolous, and she found that though very few members could hold the attention of the House, those who could, like Mirabeau, were certain of a tremendous ovation from the Assembly itself and from the crowded galleries above, for, like Demosthenes in the market-place at Athens, orators in that riding school spoke to Paris itself.

And after all one cannot but feel that the members of the Constituent Assembly showed their good sense in paying scant attention to many of the speeches delivered in their chamber, for the speaking was uncommonly bad in manner and often poor in matter, and there was practically no debate. Speakers brought carefully composed themes with them which in many cases they read to a bored and inattentive audience.<sup>1</sup> Even Mirabeau occasionally made use of fully written-out speeches. Members had no hesitation in getting other people to compose their orations, nor in using long unacknowledged quotations from well-known authors. Rousseau and Montesquieu were largely drawn upon for arguments and largely paraphrased. Men like Barnave,

<sup>1</sup> Aulard, *Les Orateurs de la Constituante*, pp. 50-1.

who improvised their speeches, were regarded with unbounded admiration and easily carried audiences off their feet. Gradually it dawned on all members that this was the only way to speak, and that if a man were chained in a prepared argument, he could get no further, he could not debate. By degrees it was seen to be absolutely necessary to use improvised arguments provoked by the actual subject of discussion. This, when it became common practice, infused new life and interest into the proceedings, and it was a matter of great interest to spectators like Madame Roland to watch the developments of this new art of politics.

From her box at the end of the riding school Madame Roland, during her visits to the Assembly, searched eagerly for the men of whom she had heard and read so much. She "had studied the character and talents of each member and hastened to see if their person and manner of speaking would add or take away from her judgment of them." The men of the Right or Royalist party sat nearest to her, and she picked out Mirabeau at once by his large head and great shock of hair, but in spite of his statuesque, majestic manner in the Tribune,<sup>1</sup> she judged him more in love with applause than eager for the public good. When he died, a few weeks later, she felt he was no loss to his country. Another conspicuous figure, whose general appearance resembled that of Mirabeau, was the Abbé Maury, Academician, famous preacher and determined

<sup>1</sup> She heard Mirabeau make one of his last speeches on the Emigration Laws, February 28, 1791.

enemy of the Revolution. Unlike Mirabeau, he never went to the Tribune with a prepared theme in his hand, but wrote his speeches out in full and then tore them up and trusted to his own mind. He was always ready to speak on any subject, no matter how technical. He dealt with every question; people said of him, "What fluency! He speaks of everything without ever having learned anything!"

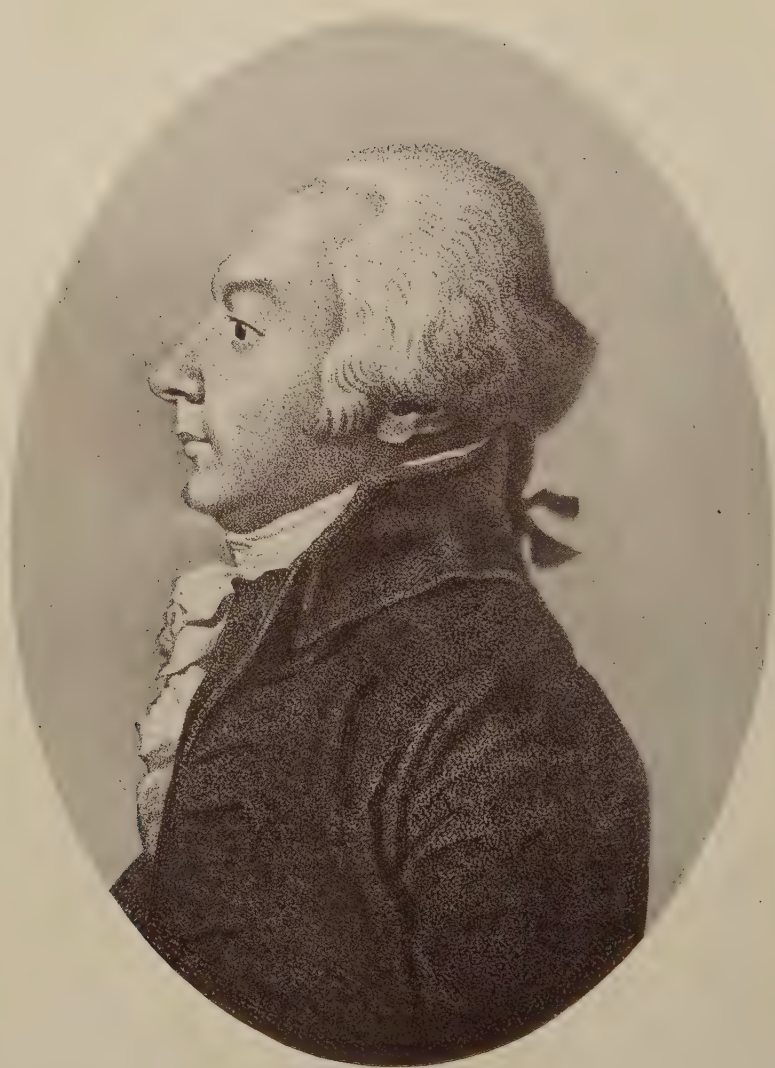
To Madame Roland, Maury appeared "subtle and captious," "nothing but a sophist of great talent." His big, rough rival Cazalés seemed to her "a terrible force." He was a heavily built man, whose large face was badly marked by small-pox. His very appearance made one think he must be absorbed in great affairs, in far-reaching schemes: he was outrageously shabby and wore an old felt hat full of holes, his *culottes* were always slipping down, and he continually hitched them up while speaking. Whereas Maury improvised his policy from day to day, Cazalés had clear, well-grounded opinions about the Government he wished to see established in France. No one believed in Maury's sincerity; every one respected Cazalés' character. He was strongly opposed to the Revolution, and held the old discredited faith that royal authority should be the tutelary divinity of Frenchmen. Madame Roland from her coign of vantage also observed "the seductive Lameths, two brothers Charles and Alexandre, the idols of the people but unhappily made to misguide the people if they are not watched." Both these men had fought in the American War, and both were later on to fight



again in 1792—Charles in command of a cavalry division in the Northern Army, and Alexandre under Lückner. A man who came in for particular censure was a reactionary called D'Epresmenil, whose blind hatred for the Revolution made him seem "ridiculous, a mere juggler," in Madame Roland's sight; she rejoiced to see that when he appealed to the Assembly on the question of royal inviolability, and asked, "By what right the King should be called a simple public functionary, since his person is sacred, inviolable, exempt from jurisdiction?" he roused but little interest and no enthusiasm in his audience; a few members shouted "*Vive le Roi!*"—the rest were cold and silent.

Barnave, a Dauphiné deputy, is described by Madame Roland as being "small of stature, of voice and of reason, 'cold as a *citrouille* fricasseed in snow,' as Ninon de l'Enclos said of the Marquis de Sevigné." Reputations were made and lost rapidly in the Constituent Assembly, and she could not imagine why Barnave was so much thought of. He was an ordinary sort of man, a constitutional monarchist, and his views were the views of the majority of the Assembly up to the time of the Flight to Varennes. He spoke without notes, which impressed his listeners, but Madame Roland felt there was not much in him. Mirabeau pointed him out on the occasion of his first speech "as a sapling which will become the mast of the vessel," but later on he gibbeted him "as a man in whom there is no divinity." Le Chapelier, a good speaker of the second rank, also attracted Madame Roland's





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notice. She thought the speeches of this Rennes lawyer clear and methodical, though he did not always make his points. The most remarkable thing about him was his appearance, and he was known to the Assembly as "*le modèle des beaux.*" His hair was invariably curled and powdered, his dress very elegant and modish, and he never was seen without six or seven rings on his fingers, but for all his vanity he still remained ugly and was obliged to wear spectacles. The gossip of the Piste had it that he changed the furniture of his rooms constantly, so as to keep in the forefront of the fashion. His indolence was only equalled by his marvellous facility. He improvised every speech, and men sometimes said he was a finer orator than Mirabeau. Madame Roland mentions other deputies in her letters and *Mémoires*—Montlosier, for example, who thought all patriots ought to be hanged, then Roederer, Target, Thouret and many more; but she took no particular interest in them, for they were mere constitutional Royalists, and her admiration and interest were concentrated on the extreme left of the Assembly, the dim far-off other end of the ellipse, the corner in which congregated the true patriots, Buzot, Pétion and Robespierre. Day after day she sat in the Riding School watching and listening for hours together. Her general impression was that the debates, if such they could be called, were feeble in the extreme, that the Royalist party had it all their own way, that there was no effective forward or patriotic party. She knew well enough that the men who spoke at the Jacobin Club, where she also spent a good deal of time, and the men who

talked in her own sitting-room did not hold the dull Royalist views of the majority of the Assembly, but so far circumstances had given them no chance of making themselves felt.

As a matter of fact, there were no formally recognised parties in the Constituent Assembly till after the escape of the King. Each member spoke for himself, as it were, and voted as it seemed good to himself on each motion. A tendency, however, was noticeable among representatives to seek the neighbourhood and support of colleagues from the same province. In these departmental groups one had, as it were, the *cadre* of political parties, a foreshadowing as of the Gironde; but the general patriotic sense of the Assembly kept this tendency in check, and by an unwritten convention the deputies agreed not to range themselves in groups.<sup>1</sup> Even Mirabeau could not make himself the leader of a party, for no one at that time would forgo his personal freedom to the extent of engaging himself to vote before the actual moment for decision came. In fact, members boasted that there was no such thing as a party in the Riding School. Though the events of 1791 were destined to cause the Constituent to fall naturally into two parties, "the aristocrats" and "the patriots," there was no open and declared opposition till 29th June 1791, when a section of the Assembly of every shade of opinion, varying from that of Maury to that of Malouet, signed a protest against the way the King had been treated. It was, however, noticed by the people of Paris all through the first

<sup>1</sup> *Orateurs de la Révolution*, vol. i. p. 57.



months of 1791 that the deputies sitting on the right of the President voted for the most part against revolutionary measures, and that those sitting on his left voted for them, and from that moment the words "Right" and "Left" entered the language with a new significance. It was not till the debate on the Veto that the distinction was officially recognised. The Centre did not come into existence till the days of the Legislative Assembly.

It was some consolation, during March and April 1791, for Madame Roland to watch the behaviour of her friends, the three incorruptibles, Pétion, Buzot and Robespierre, in the Assembly, for they at least were not afraid to fight for principles and to demand the putting into practice of the Declaration of Rights. It was interesting, too, in the evenings to be able to discuss the events and speeches of the day with them in her *salon*. She felt that she was getting at a comprehensive view of the political and social conditions of her country by means of these discussions, and a comprehensive view of affairs might prove a useful asset if ever her husband held high office. It rather worried her that Robespierre, his blinking eyes concealed by spectacles, should sit silent in her sitting-room gnawing his finger-nails, listening to everything that was said, and then go and make use the next day at the Assembly or the Jacobin Club of the materials he had collected at her house. This habit of his gave her a feeling of distrust towards him, but still, as she said to Roland, "one forgives a patriot many things," and undoubtedly the man was a patriot, whose day had not yet

come, a man of principles rather than of policy ; a man who could lay down what ought to be done, but very, very rarely could explain how it might be done. His rôle in the Assembly, Madame Roland found, was to be a man of virtue and principle ; at the Jacobin Club he was infinitely more active, a frequent speaker and an untiring organiser. It was there, and not in the Assembly, that he made his reputation. In the Assembly he sat icily aloof with Pétion and Buzot, making no friends. Deputies had begun by laughing at him for his old-fashioned, laboured discourses and his provincialism. His one ambition as a young man had been to write and speak well ; he took immense pains to do so, and his early academic orations are hardly more stilted than his early private correspondence. For example, in writing to thank a young lady who had sent him some canaries as a present, he said :

“ They are very pretty, but since they had been brought up by you we expected them to be more tame and the most sociable of all canaries. What was our surprise on approaching the cage to see them hurl themselves against the bars with such impetuosity as to make one fear for their life. And this is the manœuvre they commence every time they perceive the hand which nourishes them. What plan of education did you adopt for them ? Whence do they derive their wild character ? . . . Should not a face like yours have easily accustomed your canaries to human faces in general ? Or is it rather that having seen yours they cannot endure the sight of others ? ”

It must have been exceedingly mortifying to this stylist to have his first discourses in the Assembly greeted by ribald laughter, but it

merely made him set his teeth and determine that one day they should laugh no more. Pétion seemed to Madame Roland a cool, sensible person, with courage; but he was not much of a speaker, though he prided himself on his improvised oratorical efforts. Buzot spoke far better than either of them, but his real talent did not show itself till later on. His was the kind of talent that requires personal inspiration to bring it to perfection, and at this time he had no confidence in others or in himself. None of these three men had, so to speak, any politics; their rôle was to wait and to record, for their day was not to come till after the Flight of the King, an event which justified all their worst forecasts and fears of Monarchical Government, but which nevertheless was to open to them the golden gate of opportunity.

Viewed from a distance the changes we call the French Revolution appear to have taken place rapidly. To the reformers who lived at that time events seemed to move very, very slowly. It is the same for all who live through great happenings, such as Wars and Revolutions. Moments become hours, days months. The magnitude of the events which for ever change the face of the world seem to have the effect of making men long impatiently for things to move ever more swiftly. Men suffer too from a furious desire to get the catastrophe over, so as to be able to settle down to ordinary life again. Madame Roland especially suffered from this form of impatience, and longed to be able to precipitate affairs to their inevitable goal.

Taking all in all, Madame Roland was dreadfully disappointed with the Assembly. Nothing seemed to go on there but dreary, pointless oratory; not only did nothing happen there, but it did not seem to her as if anybody wanted anything to happen. The so-called Revolution was a wretched business, for it had hardly effected any change, except that some of the powers and privileges of the aristocrat had been transferred to the bourgeois. The members of the Assembly did not seem to be lacking in intelligence, but they certainly were lacking in soul—"and nothing but soul," as Manon said, "can elevate a nature to generous self-forgetfulness!" One day at the end of April she left the Riding School in a fever of anger, persuaded that the Assembly would never accomplish anything but follies, and vowing never to enter its doors again. "I can no longer go to the Assembly, it makes me ill." The particular debate that caused her to fly the House was that on the Army. Buzot had taken part in it, proposing that non-active citizens should be admitted to the National Guard. Madame Roland had something of a military mind, and questions of national defence interested her a great deal more than discussions on tariffs and *octroi* duties. She was well primed in them, for not only did she talk them over with Buzot, but since the Jacobin Club, which she attended regularly, had imposed on itself the duty of discussing the subjects with which the Assembly was about to deal, she there had learnt that there were no arms wherewith to equip the army reserve, that the very frontiers of France were in jeopardy, that supplies, ammunition,

men alike were lacking, that Bâle and Berne were allowing the passage of Imperial troops, and that German soldiers were encamped at Porentruy. And in face of all these dangers, the Assembly was supine, or indifferent, or blind, or stupid—it was enough to madden any patriot. “Paris seemed to be crammed with foreigners from nowhere, the aristocratic party is more full of ‘morgue’ than ever, it talks of carnage.” She was haunted by the possibility of a Royalist *coup d’état*, and it seemed to her that it must only be a matter of months before a successful counter-revolution was put through.

Madame Roland did her best to find out what the actual situation with regard to the Army was at the moment. She knew that in response to the demand of the majority of the Cahiers of 1789,<sup>1</sup> the old militia had been abolished,<sup>2</sup> and a system of voluntary enlistment agreed upon,<sup>3</sup> that it had been extremely difficult to bring the Royal army up to its full standard of strength and efficiency in 1791; that officers had emigrated and men were insubordinate. The Royal army had formerly been recruited from the militia, and when this was done away with and the possibility of European war stared the Government in the face, the members of the Constituent Assembly had had to devise some other way of filling up the ranks. On the motion of Alexandre Lameth,<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Les Volontaires Nationaux pendant la Révolution*, vol. i. p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Resolved, August 4, 1789. Made law, March 4, 1791. “Le régime des milices est aboli; en conséquence, les 13 régiments de grenadiers royaux, les 14 régiments provinciaux, et les 78 Bataillons de garnison formant les troupes provinciales sont et demeurent supprimés.”

<sup>3</sup> February 8 and 18, 1791.

<sup>4</sup> January 28, 1791.



it had been agreed, in January, to raise 100,000 "auxiliary soldiers," as a means of placing the regular army on a war footing. It was this force that Madame Roland discovered to be insufficiently equipped and totally unfit to take the field. She was certain there must be war—civil war and probably invasion—and it drove her frantic to think that the wretched pacifists of the Assembly were making no real effort to rise to the occasion—that they still acted as if they believed the King to be true to the Constitution and the country.

She consoled herself with the familiar argument that war may, perhaps, not be so bad a thing for a people after all. "Adversity forms nations as it does individuals, and even civil war, horrible as it is, may further the regeneration of our character and our customs. We must be ready for everything—even to die without regrets." She did her best to stimulate interest in Army affairs by begging her old friend, Bosc, the post-office official, to organise a vigorous petition from the Sections of Paris to the Assembly in favour of a strong National Guard. With flashing eyes she asked him where courage was? where duty? and said "it is all very well to tell me there are 25,000,000 people in France, when amongst them there are not 300,000 men who can bear arms." Bosc himself ought to be up and doing, and "he should remember that quiet men did not admire Brutus till the Revolution made him the fashion." (Madame Roland did not seem to realise that poor Bosc, though an idealist and an admirer of her views, was no leader, that he was more at home

among plants than politicians. ] It was rather like asking Wordsworth to lead the United Irishmen. Bosc lived among quiet people, and all his great friends, Creuzé - Latouche, Garran de Coulon, Bancal and Lanthénas, were keen "herborisers." He was never happier than when organising, not a sectional petition for strengthening the Army, but a nature festival, the unveiling of a head of Linnæus, for example, under the cedar he had planted in the Jardin des Plantes, the erection of a bust of Rousseau at the entry to his beloved forest of Montmorency. The latter fête, in which the bust of Jean Jacques was carried "by mothers of families, hymned by young girls and escorted by old men bearing stones from the Bastille," ended in a dance under illuminated trees to the delight of Bosc and all other gentle botanists. These outings were much more congenial to the sentimental disciples of Rousseau than the raising of an army, and Madame Roland had to look elsewhere for saviours of the State.

Always prone to be carried off her feet by any show of enthusiasm for principles, Madame Roland conceived a great admiration for Abbé Fauchet, "a man distinguished by great talents who had devoted himself whole-heartedly with incomparable enthusiasm to the Revolution." She listened to his speeches and conversation with keen pleasure, and got to know him quite well. Through talking to individuals she found out how really powerless any person is to conduct a revolution, and became more convinced every day that it is only by general associations that despotism can be put down. "It is vain to hope

for liberty unless we can persuade our neighbours to worship it."

A few days previous to the army debate which so disgusted Madame Roland, a curious, unexpected thing had happened in Paris. No one at the time was thinking much about Louis xvi.; he had apparently played his limited part honourably, he had sanctioned the constitutional priesthood, it could not be alleged that he had not done what was asked of him, and yet he was dimly distrusted by the people. On the Monday in Holy Week currents of unexpressed opinion crystallised in an odd way. The Royal coach with its two black horses was drawn up in the Place du Carrousel, and had just received its distinguished passengers, who were about to set off to the palace of Saint Cloud for an Easter holiday. Suddenly the tocsin rang, people crowded round the carriage, hands of National Guards were laid upon the reins—the King, it appeared, was not to be allowed to go to Saint Cloud. Louis, phlegmatic as always, remained quietly in the coach, while Marie Antoinette boiled with anger beside him—anger with him, anger with the crowd—mortification and disdain. "The spectacle of the King sitting quite obstinately there for one hour and three-quarters was calculated," Madame Roland said, "to undermine the idolatry which some people still preserved for him." No ray of divinity hedged that fatuous personage for her as he patiently waited for Lafayette to disperse the mob, while the people made loud, unpleasant remarks as to what Paris thought of the Queen. It was almost as if the people had some proof of

her treason to the Constitution that Louis, her husband, had sworn to uphold; and knew of their joint design to leave France at the bidding of the Allies.<sup>1</sup> By whose orders the coach had been prevented from starting no one knew; it was all very unexpected, but the result was that Louis could not leave Paris or make his Easter Communion at the hands of a non-juring priest. He therefore decided to adopt a new line of conduct; in future he would identify himself with the Revolution,<sup>2</sup> would anticipate the wishes of the *canaille* who had him in their power, would do anything to regain the confidence of the mob so that he might peacefully leave Paris when he chose. Poor man, he was out of Paris but five days after this, five days that were spent in a travelling carriage on the hot and dusty highway that led to and from Varennes.

He went so far in his efforts to placate the mob that he decided to confess to and receive Communion at the hands of a juring priest.<sup>3</sup> After this sacrilege can one wonder that he did not shrink from swearing fidelity (with mental reservations) to the Constitution, from putting his name to documents with closed eyes, and from intrigue with the enemies of France? On the Tuesday in Holy Week the King came down to the Assembly—Madame Roland was there—to make the farcical declaration that he was a free agent, and that at the request of his ministers he would notify the Powers of this fact. But he

<sup>1</sup> "Léopold et les autres alliés du Roi exigeaient sa sortie de Paris avant de faire aucune disposition en sa faveur."—Sorel, *L'Europe et la Révolution Française*, vol. ii. p. 142.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. ii. p. 188.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. ii. p. 189.



also took the precaution through Fersen and Breteuil of sending a second notification begging those same Powers not to be surprised at any of the public acts of the King and the Queen of France—since they were but the consequence of their *non-liberty*. He also urged his rescuers to hurry to his aid, and promised to co-operate with them by effecting his escape at the first opportunity.

For the moment we will leave the King and Queen in their prison palace in order to see how Roland was succeeding with his mission. While his wife was so assiduously attending the meetings of the Assembly and the Club, he knocked equally assiduously at the doors of the Treasury, presenting himself daily before the *Comité des Contributions Publiques* in order to put through the business that had brought him to Paris. On 9th June he sent a report on his work (written by his wife) to the Lyons Council. He told them he had been bandied about from Committee to Committee; had had interviews with deputies, presidents and ministers; had been recommended to appeal at the Bar of the Assembly; and had experienced to the full all the delays incidental to the procuring of grants of money from the State. After four months in the capital he found that he had accomplished absolutely nothing, and in order to make this fact acceptable to the Council of Lyons, the letter conveying his report of progress had to be very well worded and full of hope. By dint of perseverance he was in the end able to execute his mission most satisfactorily, but it was seven and not four months' work, and so the Rolands were kept in Paris till the early autumn.



## CHAPTER VII

### LIFE IN PARIS

“Il faut faire vite pour faire beaucoup.”—*Pope Jules II.*, GOBINEAU.

IT is difficult for contemporaries to gauge the causes of events with any accuracy, so much is hidden, so much is obscure, but if one had been in Paris during May and June 1791 one would have found that although nobody knew very much about the inner history of current affairs, citizens as a whole held three opinions firmly. An indication of these opinions had manifested itself in the Saint Cloud episode described in the last chapter. Parisians were sure that a league of Kings was being formed to crush their new-born liberty, to exterminate what was known in Austria as *le mal Français*; and further they believed that the King and Queen were secretly backing up this foreign coalition, and meant to escape from Paris to join their royal allies. They were also convinced that the standing army personified in Lafayette, the military governor of Paris, was Royalist in sympathy and deep in the plot to restore absolute monarchy. Madame Roland, of course, held all these opinions, and when at precisely 10 a.m. on Tuesday, the 21st of June, she unsealed her letter of the day before to Bancal to announce the news of the flight of the King and Queen, she added, “It is hardly

possible but that Lafayette is an accomplice." She added, "guns are booming," "drums beating the alarm," "shops shutting," and "excited crowds running through the streets." Once more she sealed her letter, and then hastily putting on her hat, joined the stream of people flowing towards the Tuileries, in order to hear what had really happened. As she moved along in the crowd she heard all sorts of news—for example, she was told that just before eight that morning Lafayette had been roused from sleep with the news that the King and Queen had left Paris, that he had tumbled into his uniform, and set out jauntily down the rue de Bourbon with his aide-de-camp, followed by a crowd shouting the ugly word "Traitor!" She heard how he had met Bailly, the Mayor of Paris, and Beauharnais, the President of the Assembly,<sup>1</sup> who were both on their way to see him, at the corner of the rue du Bac; how these three men had made their way across the Pont Royal to the Carrousel, which was alive with people; how a pathway seemed to open magically in front of them, as, followed by a few dejected-looking officers, they made their way to the Palace. She heard of Lafayette's smile, of Beauharnais' grave look and of Bailly's obvious anxiety.

Madame Roland did not know as we do what these men said as they walked across the Carrousel discussing the measures that should be taken. It was 8.30 when they reached the Tuileries, and there was no possible way of getting the Assembly to meet before 9, yet every moment was precious, for every moment the King was getting nearer

<sup>1</sup> First husband of Empress Josephine.

the frontier. Neither President Beauharnais nor Mayor Bailly had any idea of taking action, at any rate until the Assembly had ordered it. Suddenly Lafayette asked Bailly whether he thought the arrest of the King and his family was *necessary* for the public good. "Certainly," said Bailly; "but by what right can we arrest him? Where is the power? Who can give the order?" Lafayette promptly shouldered the responsibility by writing and signing an order for the King's arrest. A number of copies of this order were immediately made, which he also signed. Officers furnished with the order were then detailed to the various routes leading from Paris to the frontier. This decision taken, Lafayette called for his horse, and rode unescorted to the Hôtel de Ville. As he dismounted people pressed round to pat his beautiful white Arab, but many unpleasant remarks were made by those members of the crowd who were not taken up in admiring the charger. Mounting the steps of the Hôtel de Ville the General smiled at the people below him and said, "My children, the civil list of Louis XVI. is twenty-five million livres; every Frenchman to-day inherits one livre of income." The crowd cheered, and he went on: "You call this flight a misfortune! What name would you give to a counter-revolution that would deprive you of liberty?" Saluting the people he took Bailly's arm and disappeared into the Mansion House.

[The Assembly met at 9, and Beauharnais, the President, came in, looking very grave, at 9.15. He made a formal announcement of the departure of the King, which was received in dead silence. A

minute or two later a deputy called Regnaud proposed that couriers should be dispatched to arrest all persons quitting the kingdom. Beauharnais stated that Lafayette had already given orders to this effect, and members immediately began to question by what right he, a mere military governor, had done such a thing. After some explanation and argument the Assembly agreed that he had acted promptly and wisely, and that he deserved support, but insisted that couriers from the Assembly should also be dispatched to reinforce his messengers. This decision was followed by a confused babel of resolutions, which was interrupted by the arrival of an officer with the text of Lafayette's order. The Assembly desired to hear it, and, after applauding it, caused their own similar order to be read aloud, and from henceforward civil and military authorities worked together in the great game of catching the King.

Those who distrusted Lafayette did not think much of his justification of himself, as he that day explained to the Assembly that he and Bailly had known since Whitsuntide that there was a project of evasion in the air, and that in consequence he had doubled the guards of the Palace. It seemed strange to some of his hearers to learn that during the night of the 20th-21st of June the guards were taken from the same company that was on duty at the Palace on the 18th of April, when the King and Queen had tried to go to Saint Cloud, and on the 28th of February, during *l'Affaire des Poignards*, when an attempt had been made to rescue the King. One member asked that some explanation

should be offered by the Commandant and his subordinates for this carelessness or apparent complicity, but Barnave and Lameth intervened to prevent any charge being brought against Lafayette. When Madame Roland heard of this intervention, this determination to save Lafayette, she made up her mind that it was part of a conspiracy to prevent Robespierre, Pétion and Buzot from getting a hearing in the House and saying plainly what she and many other people thought of the General. Apart from this particular grievance she was annoyed that the Assembly should proceed to issue manifestos urging the people to have confidence in the Government, when she could see no possible reason for such confidence to be given. After all, to her certain knowledge proper precautions to guard against invasion had not been taken; it was common talk that the military and diplomatic committees of the Assembly were feeble and unreliable in the extreme, that the House as a whole was riddled with royalism, and therefore, in the new sense of the word, “anti-patriotic.”]

The Assembly sat with closed doors this fateful Tuesday, and Madame Roland could not effect an entry to the gallery. She learnt, however, in the afternoon, that it had been proposed and agreed that seals should be placed upon all royal papers at the Tuileries; that a guard should in future be made responsible for the King's person; that the Great Seal should be affixed to the decrees of the Assembly by the Minister of Justice, without the sanction of the King; and that, changing in spirit faster than in form, the Assembly had



rejected Guillaume's motion to substitute the preamble, "*The Constituent Assembly decrees and ordains*" for "*Louis by the grace of God and by the constitutional law of the state decrees and ordains,*" although, as an Assembly, it had already declared itself permanent and taken over executive power. A phrase or a preamble matters little when events are moving quickly, and Madame Roland fully realised the King was suspended in fact though not in word.

From this time on the Assembly behaved as a king; it gave orders to Ministers, it notified its accession to power to foreign nations; it caused diplomatic correspondence to be read to it, it sent representatives on special missions, and yet, with what seemed to Madame Roland marvellous inconsequence, it showed that it wished to maintain royalty by its address to the French people on the day after the Flight, when the "carrying off" of the King was denounced as the work of enemies of the State! She would have said that the best friends of the State were those who caused the King to disappear most rapidly. The oddest thing of all to thoughtful observers was that Paris cheerfully accepted the departure of the King, and took the resolution of the Assembly as a matter of course.

On such a day as this Tuesday it was impossible for any patriot to stay quietly indoors, so Madame Roland wandered round by the Palais Royal, the Tuileries, the Carrousel, the Pont Neuf to hear what was being said. Everybody seemed either gay or contemptuous, and a lot of people were busy defacing the Royal arms and insignia of royalty. It gave her some satisfaction to find royalty had

begun to be looked upon as "a bogey for children and a burden for men." The people were amusing themselves breaking up busts of Louis or else covering his eyes with paper bandages. A hatter called *Louis* was obliged to efface his own name from over his shop. Thousands of Parisians were crowding curiously into the Tuileries that afternoon, doing no harm, but cracking jokes at the expense of the late inmates. After taking stock of events and persons, Madame Roland came to think that the escape of the Royal Family, far from being a misfortune, might prove a great advantage to the party of reform; but, haunted by her want of confidence in the intention of the Assembly, she felt convinced that it would go in for compromise of some kind. Had she, with her hatred of half-measures, been in power, she would have "sequestered the Royal mannikin and tried his wife."

It was said in the Piste that the King had escaped by river, that he had gone to sea, that he was in the forest of Compiègne. Every sort of story flew about, and it was extremely difficult for the Assembly, which had declared itself "in permanence," to pass to common business and debate, with any sort of interest or attention, the clauses of the Penal Code, on which it was engaged. After luncheon there was a welcome interlude; it seemed that the King had left a letter with M. de Laporte, intendant of the civil list, addressed to his subjects; M. de Laporte was summoned to the Assembly, and Regnier, one of the secretaries, was handed the farewell letter to read aloud. It was entitled "Declaration of the King on leaving Paris addressed to all French people." The read-

ing of this document mortified Royalists and gave unconcealed pleasure to Progressives. In it the King complained of want of convenience in his apartments, of the inadequacy of the civil list of twenty-five million livres, and of many other things. The declaration took an hour to read, and, though full of recrimination, it contained no menace. Everybody breathed more freely when it was over; there was no danger then, no tragic issue to be feared from anything so inept as this letter, or from so poor-spirited an adversary as Louis XVI. On the motion of Grégoire the Assembly formally resumed the discussion on the Penal Code, and then adjourned till 6 p.m. By 4.30 deputies were free to fly off to cafés and restaurants to talk over all that had happened. Madame Roland, who was as excited as any one, went round to the Pétions in the faubourg Saint Honoré, and there she found Clavières, Brissot, Buzot and also Robespierre, the last named "quivering with terror." The little Deputy assured her that the Royal Family would never have made such a move unless they were sure of being backed up by a coalition which would order a Saint Bartholomew of patriots. As for himself, he did not expect to live twenty-four hours. Pétion and Brissot took a different line; both said that the King's escape was his undoing, that it should be made capital of, that the disposition of the people was excellent, that the manœuvre would prove the treachery of the Court in a way no mere words would ever have done, that it must now be obvious to all that the King would have none of the Constitution which he had sworn to uphold, and that

minds must be prepared for a Republic. Robespierre grinned in his odd way and stopped gnawing at his nails to ask what a Republic was.

The friends then discussed the project of a Republican journal, which was eventually to take form in the hands of Dumont, Condorcet and Brissot, though it was never to attain Madame Roland's ideal of what such a journal should be. As Clavières, Pétion and Buzot talked over the situation together, Madame Roland realised in listening to them that, though the Flight might serve as an argument against one King, it was no argument against the Royalist principle of Government that she detested. It made her rather unhappy to know that Brissot, Clavières and some of the others were in favour of maintaining the Royalist keystone of the Constitution. To their minds there was nothing to be feared from a King and Queen subject to constitutional laws, if they were liable to be tried like other citizens. After a good deal of discussion, it was decided that Robespierre should move and Buzot second a motion in the Assembly embodying this safeguard in the following words: "The King and Queen are citizens subject to the Law. Its principles should be applied to them." All through the discussion Pétion quietly went on playing his violin.<sup>1</sup> Brissot was intensely annoyed by this "frivolity" and "indifference"; so indeed was Madame Roland, who said that through the Flight patriots had come to the parting of the ways. Both she and Buzot looked upon the Flight as a real event, "a declaration of war"; both felt that the moment called for action, or at

<sup>1</sup> *Mémoires d'Etienne Dumont*, p. 288.



any rate for a definite protest. Buzot tells us that his old "aversion for Royalty now manifested itself without reserve," and in Madame Roland he found a willing listener. A woman, after all, could do very little, but at any rate she knew of an army in which to enrol herself, and found great relief to her feelings in rushing off straightway to join the *Société Fraternelle des Deux Sexes*.

When the Assembly met again at 6 p.m. that same evening, there was some desultory debating, and then, as there was no news, the discussion of the Penal Code was resumed. Presently, to every one's obvious relief, there was a military interlude. Rochambeau, dressed as a general officer, clanked up to the bar before taking up his new command of the Army of the North, to swear fidelity to the Assembly and willingness to shed his blood in defence of his country. Following him came Generals Crillon, Lafayette, de Rostaing and d'Elbecq. The greatest enthusiasm prevailed, which increased as one by one the members of the Assembly who were also soldiers stepped down from their seats, and, in the person of de la Tour Maubourg, who dominated them all by his great height, swore the same fealty. Even the Royalists of the Assembly had it brought home to them by this demonstration how completely the Flight had undermined the position of the Crown. It was tacitly admitted that officers no longer held their commission from the King but from the people.

In a blaze of enthusiasm for the patriot soldiers a decree was immediately proposed, transforming the National Guard of the kingdom into an



active paid army till the danger to the State be passed. A daily expenditure of 300,000 livres was voted for this purpose without discussion; it seemed well to members that in case of disaffection in the Royal army, patriot generals should have patriot soldiers under their command. The vista opened up by the Flight contained terrible possibilities. The King might plan an invasion of France; it was unknown whether the remnants of the old army would co-operate with him or no, but since these officers had taken their decision to stand by the Government and not by a defaulting King, it was felt that they deserved all the support that the national representatives could give them.

That Tuesday was an interminable day to Madame Roland and many other people. In the evening the streets of Paris were illuminated and gay crowds paraded them. By midnight, however, the crowd had gone to bed, but the Assembly sat on and on—in permanence—waiting for news of capture or of civil war. They discussed the police, the navy, colonial contributions, tariff and *octroi* duties and once again the Penal Code, and so filled up the long hours. At 4 a.m. they adjourned till 9 a.m., but midday on the 22nd found them still without news. All Wednesday dragged slowly by. Many people thought the King must have got out of the country. By 10 p.m. most of the members had left the House, but three-quarters of an hour later they were flocking back into the Riding School to hear “the message” from Varennes, from its municipal officers, asking for orders. The excitement was intense, for Varennes was but ten leagues from the frontier.

Directly the message had been read the sitting of the House was suspended from eleven till midnight; then the President proposed, and it was unanimously carried, that three envoys be sent from the Assembly, MM. de la Tour-Maubourg, Pétion and Barnave, accompanied by M. Matthieu Dumas, the adjutant-general, to fetch the King from Varennes. The three deputies left the Assembly at 12.30, agreeing to meet at La Tour-Maubourg's house in the rue Saint Dominique in two hours' time. Duport, the Minister of Justice, and Lafayette went to confer with these deputies, and as they were waiting for Barnave to arrive, they discussed the rather ridiculous situation: What was to be done with the King when they had caught him? And it was felt that Pétion's remark, "The fat pig is a great embarrassment" expressed their dilemma well. At 4 a.m. Barnave arrived, and the three envoys got into their carriage and went round to pick up General Dumas. As they drove along the country roads early that Thursday morning, they found them full of people in holiday mood, for it was the Feast of Corpus Christi. Messages kept reaching them from the front: "Bouillé's army is rescuing the King"—"the peasants are arming"—"Varennes is destroyed, its inhabitants are massacred." No one quite knew what to expect, and farmers and peasants, old and young, crowded the roads, all carrying hatchets, scythes, flintlocks and sabres. Pétion described his drive as "just like a wedding party"—one cannot think why, except that he and his colleagues received the delighted greetings of the people they passed.

Dumas, the adjutant-general, rode by the door of the carriage conveying the deputies, and all heads uncovered instinctively to these representatives of the nation. At last the long day's journey came to its conclusion, and the meeting at Varennes between these envoys and the Royal Family took place. The King amiably assured them he had not wanted to leave France; Madame Elizabeth did likewise. There was no answer to be made to such an assertion, and Pétion simply read his warrant to the King, then, mounting the steps of the royal *berline* just as the sun set, he read it in a louder voice to the people.

Dumas took charge of the escort, and it was explained to the runaways that two of the commissioners had orders to travel in the same conveyance as the Royalties. Pétion and Barnave drove with the King and Queen, but La Tour-Maubourg gladly escaped into the carriage of the ladies-in-waiting, and in this order the miserable little party started on that hot Thursday evening along the dusty road to Paris.

By the Saturday evening of that endless week, the Royal travellers had reached the Tuileries. Except that they were hot and dusty and surrounded by a covered crowd and by soldiers who did not salute, one might have said, on looking at the King's fatuous face, that it was a return from a picnic. Madame Roland did not go out to see the arrival of the cortège, for she felt no personal interest in the Royal party or their doings; she sat at home writing letters, and trying to determine a course of action for real patriots. The following day she heard that delegates from the

Assembly had waited on the King to receive his declaration as to the motive of his journey. He had protested once more that he had not wished to leave his kingdom; the Queen made an equally unsatisfactory declaration. The only comment passed by deputies and people on hearing of these inept statements was, "Is it possible to lie to this extent?" From this time forward in the streets one might have heard the King called "Louis the false—the fat pig." He was held up to ridicule in endless more or less good-humoured caricatures, but the Queen was bitterly hated, for the people of Paris felt that, being a foreigner, she was the prime mover in all intrigues and escapades, and that left to himself their King most probably would not have left his kingdom.

Pétion told Madame Roland afterwards of his drive from Varennes, how the little Dauphin had read off the inscription on the buttons of his coat, "*Vivre libre ou mourir*," and told his mother what it meant; how conversation languished from time to time with the Royal ladies, and how the King chattered; how they halted at Dormans for six hours, and resumed their journey on Friday, the 24th, at six o'clock on a fine morning; how the people escorted them from village to village; how dreadfully dusty it was; how the sun poured in upon them, as the people would not permit them to drive with the blinds down; how on Saturday afternoon at three o'clock they reached Pantin, where Lafayette was waiting with his staff; how enormous crowds surrounded the carriage and stretched miles in front of them and miles behind them; how on every corner and



projection of the royal *berline* patriots clustered ; how they travelled at funeral pace down the avenue of the Champs Elysées between a hedge of National Guards with arms reversed. Madame Roland heard the whole miserable story, and it did not touch her in the least ; she was quite indifferent to suffering of this kind ; her attention was entirely taken up with the political significance, and not with the human interest, of the Flight. The Flight was one of the very few events of the Revolution that was felt by the whole nation, and Madame Roland saw it as an event that “ might cause France to win liberty only by wading through seas of blood.” In spite of Louis being an impossible King after this escape, the Assembly seemed to her unshaken in its monarchical sympathies, and the Jacobin Club not so very much better. It was all a sad disappointment. Four days after the King’s return the Jacobins held a meeting in honour of the occasion. It began quietly enough, but somehow it came about that, in a transport of enthusiasm to which Robespierre had worked them up, “ sword in air and knee on ground they swore to live free or else to die.” But even this scene resulted in no action, and after it everybody settled down quietly to listen to Danton advocating a regency and vigorously censuring Lafayette, who had come down to the Club to parade his love of liberty and to receive applause for it. Then came the turns of Siéyès and Barnave, who were also heard with equal good humour. Really, as Madame Roland said to her husband, it was impossible to know what even the Jacobins thought about the Flight,



for they seemed to be delighted with any and all expressions of opinion. And thus the sole outcome of one of the most brilliant meetings ever held by the Club, the meeting of Wednesday the 29th of June, was, as far as Madame Roland could see, talk and nothing but talk, leading to no resolution, "and this in the midst of the most grave and decisive circumstances in which we have so far found ourselves." It maddened Madame Roland and made her feel that even the patriotism of the Jacobin Club might be suspect.

No one, it seemed to Madame Roland, was big enough for the event, no one realised its true significance; the men were pygmies, set amidst gigantic opportunities. Her great faculty for essentials made her intolerant with all men; at this crisis, as on other occasions, she longed to precipitate public opinion.

It struck her that an appeal might be made to the country on the subject of monarchical government,—a referendum, as it were,—and writing to Bancal she expressed her disappointment with the temper of the Jacobins, and urged him to get up a petition from his constituency at Clermont Ferrand, begging that the primary Assemblies of France should have the question—"Whether French people wish to preserve Monarchical Government"—submitted to them without delay. She pointed out to Bancal that the contract of the Constitution accepted by the people admitted of a King: but since the very King who had been one of the contracting parties had renounced the terms of the transaction, the other party was free to insert new terms.

This effort to extract a petition from a country constituency was a thoroughly Girondin manœuvre. Since it was impossible for the small number of "patriots" sitting in the Assembly to have any direct power in influencing measures or men, it became Madame Roland's ambition to bring pressure to bear on the conservatism of the Assembly from the provinces. This ambition was destined to lead her and her party into terrible trouble later on, when matters were reversed and she tried to bring the conservatism of the provinces to bear on the Revolutionary government of the capital.

The result of the proposed referendum on Monarchical Government might, she thought, "if only the people were a little instructed," be "the perfecting of the Constitution"—in other words, the elimination of the King. It seemed to her that the people required but little education of this sort, "for the mass is sane and sees straight, there is indignation against Louis and hatred of all Kings, the word Republic seems to be in the air."

And yet, in spite of her statement that the word Republic was in the air, in those summer days of 1791 Madame Roland was a most lonely Republican. She was in the van of thought and agitation, and she had practically no backing from any friend save Buzot. "The Jacobins, as well as the Assembly," she was at one moment obliged to admit, "have convulsions at the word Republic." [Brissot, whom she had imagined after his experiences in America would push things along in his paper and formulate a policy, was

a great disappointment to her. His journal was nothing but a record of things as they happened ; it gave no political lead, no sound or statesman-like advice. ] As she wrote to Bancal : “ Time flies, and one cannot simultaneously originate ideas, watch events, interview many people and write for the Press. It is in these moments that one feels the lack of and the immense advantages of an association—such as we had imagined—of three or four independent people devoted to the public weal, busy in ripening opinion.” If Madame Roland had had it in her power to “ instruct, illumine and direct ” the people in this crisis, the Revolution might have taken a different course in so far that, with a King immediately banished or executed and a Republic declared, the invasion of France would probably have never occurred, for there would have been no one to rescue.

Madame Roland’s letters to Bancal during these critical days keep us well informed of what she was thinking and feeling. In the light of the King’s silly manifesto it was obviously most stupid to call the Flight a “ carrying off,” as it was termed in official documents. As she had said to all her friends, “ The Flight is a real declaration of war, and true patriots should determine to die in the breach sooner than abandon their country and its new ideals.” There is never anything unclear or faltering about Madame Roland. Royalty had always seemed to her the acme of absurdity, and it delighted her to hear men and women walking through the Faubourg Saint-Antoine singing “ *Ça ira*,” and sending the

King and all aristocrats to the devil. It was also encouraging to watch deputations on their way to swear a new oath of Fidelity to the Nation and the Law crowding the streets leading towards the Assembly. This "trivial energy" pleased her; at any rate, it was better than the pitiful empty talk of the Jacobin Club.

She confessed to Bancal that when she first heard that the King and Queen had been caught, she had been very much depressed, for no more than Pétion could she think what was to be done with them. To put Louis on the throne again would be an ineptitude, an absurdity, if nothing worse; to declare him *en démente*, in accordance with the provision of the Constitution against such a contingency as escape involved declaring a regent, which in itself left France as much committed to the monarchical principle as ever. It seemed a great pity to her that the King had had to be arrested, since she does not believe the Assembly will dare to try him, though perhaps it might venture on suspending him. If only he had got away, civil war would have been almost unavoidable, and "the nation would at last have been forced to go to that great school of public virtue." Every day she became more convinced of "the cruel fact that a nation slips backwards in time of peace and can never be regenerated save by blood." To her "it would be a smiling matter to spend all her strength for the triumph of the good cause, even were she to lose her life," but how many patriots in all France were there of like opinion with herself?

After considering the question of the King's



return in all its bearings, she came to the conclusion that it would be best to suspend him pending examination, and to appoint a President of the Provisional Executive. In this way she felt it might be quite possible to prove to the provinces that a King is not necessary, and that the State machine can go as well without him as with him :

“ I am profoundly depressed ; the future is only big with the kind of events in which I despair of seeing our spirits and affections exalted or purified ; I am disgusted with the Jacobins, as I was with the Assembly. In observing men must we only learn to despise them ? ”

And yet somehow, in spite of all appearances to the contrary, Madame Roland became gradually conscious of a something in the people themselves, a tendency, shall we say, that she alone at this time seems to have discerned ; “ an impulse towards liberty so strong and so universal that we must attain this liberty, even though it be through seas of blood.” “ If our descendants are to enjoy liberty we at least shall have established it ; if its reign is most productive of virtues, equally it can only be established through great virtues.” One of the signs of the times she noticed was the great stimulus given to small patriotic societies by the Flight—they really began to be bolder in conception and doctrine, the King having, so to speak, dethroned himself.

To a philosophic mind given to the just appreciation of events and circumstances, nothing could have been more striking in those June and July days than the entry into Paris of another King than Louis, a King never crowned by right divine, as was the scion of the Bourbons. On the 25th



of June a travel-stained, unshaven figure got out of a lumbering *berline* at the steps of the Tuileries ; it was Louis XVI., returning to his subjects. A few days later a car bearing a corpse entered Paris. This car had travelled across France through triumphal arches, over levelled roads, between reverent crowds. Women had touched it with kerchiefs and kept them as relics ; all heads had uncovered as it moved along. In Paris this corpse was treated with great honour ; it lay on the site of the old Bastille in a grove of roses, myrtles, laurels, to receive the homage of the people, and from this grove it was escorted by a multitude of officials to the Pantheon. How poignant was the contrast between the entry of the living and the dead only those who lived at that extraordinary moment can ever tell. Louis, crowned by right divine, returned to humiliation, servitude and degradation, while Voltaire, crowned by the opinion of the people, was solemnly enthroned by humanity itself.

## CHAPTER VIII

### PROPAGANDA AND PROGRESS

"Il est très bien de connaître la valeur réelle des choses ; mais il vaut peut-être encore mieux connaître la valeur imaginaire que les autres y attachent."  
—*Les Caractères*, MME. DE PUISIEUX.

IN London it was thought inevitable that a Republic must be the outcome of the King's escape ; in fact, a good many English people believed that the Republican Party had engineered the escape in order to further their cause. But this was not true, as we know that at the time of the Flight both the Assembly and the Jacobin Club adhered firmly to the monarchical principle of government, in spite of the disconcerting fact that the practical measures adopted by the House of Representatives to carry on the Government in themselves created a Republican interim. It is no uncommon thing in individuals or in assemblies for a gulf to separate principle from practice, and poor Madame Roland was justified in her moan that inconsistency was the keynote of public opinion ; it has seemed so to a good many impassioned reformers before and since her day. In her hunt for consistency and progress it pleased her a good deal at this time to find that a club of obscure persons meeting in the disused church of the Franciscan friars on the site of the present École de Médecine held definitely

forward views which they were not afraid to express—views which did not include the propping up of a tottering monarchy, but the readiness, if need be, to pull it down for ever in France. Two days after the Flight this group, known as the Cordeliers Club, drew up an address to the Assembly imploring that France should be declared a Republic. The text of the resolution shows the temper of the Club :

“ Here we are in the same set of circumstances as after the Fall of the Bastille—free and without a King. It remains to be proved whether it is an advantage to us to nominate another . . . we implore you in the name of the country either to declare straight away that France is no longer a monarchy—that she is in fact a Republic, or at least to wait till all the departments, all the primary assemblies, have registered their votes on this important question. We implore you to do this before replunging the finest empire in the world into the morass of monarchism.”<sup>1</sup>

M. Robert and three other members of the Cordeliers Club carried this petition to the Jacobin Club in order to canvass support for the resolution, but the Jacobins stoutly refused to have anything to do with such a protest, and greeted the Cordeliers' emissaries with howls of “ Treachery ! ” They also shouted out that “ The Monarchy was embodied in the Constitution ! ” which of course was true enough, but many people were beginning to think that since the Constitution had been violated by the Flight a totally new political situation had been created. Poor Madame Roland, quite disgusted by this exhibition of Jacobin conservatism, promptly set to work to inspire the

<sup>1</sup> Lenôtre, *Paris Révolutionnaire*, p. 321.

*Société Fraternelle des Deux Sexes* to which she herself belonged to draw up a petition similar to that emanating from the Cordeliers Club, and also tried to persuade Brissot, Lanthénas and Bosc to make the *Patriote Français* a purely Republican organ.]

As far as the education of public opinion went, journals were already in circulation which were accustoming the man in the street to think of a Kingless France. The two Cordelier papers, *L'Ami du Peuple* and *L'Orateur du Peuple*, edited respectively by Marat and Fréron, for example, advocated "a military tribune," "a supreme dictator," "a Cromwellian government," as the only way of saving the country. Fauchet and Bonneville, editors of the *Bouche de Fer*, toyed with the idea of a republic; Camille Desmoulins, in his *Revolutions de France et de Brabant*, openly advocated it,<sup>1</sup> as also did Carra, the editor of the *Annales Patriotiques*. This ventilation of opinions, if it did nothing else, accustomed the man in the street not only to think that a country could get along without a King, but also that if it were possible to procure a good government at two or three millions of livres a year, it was better than paying a bad King twenty-five millions annually. As the prestige of royalty slowly disappeared, writers became bolder and bolder: pamphleteers published articles entitled "What must be done with the King"; "Louis XVI., King of the French, dethroned by himself"; "Advantages of the Flight of Louis XVI., and the necessity of a new Government." One cannot avoid the

<sup>1</sup> Aulard, *Histoire politique*, p. 131.

conclusion that Madame Roland was not idle during the critical week of the Flight, that her pen was scribbling many a republican plea, that Brissot was not alone in his authorship of an article that appeared in *Le Patriote Français*,<sup>1</sup> declaring for "No King or else a King with an elective council."

In writing to Bancal, three weeks after the Flight, she showed herself full of new hope in the future of France. All the Girondins were hypnotised by rhetoric, and she was no exception to the rule. "Nations cannot go back: the fall of thrones is foreordained in the destiny of empires, and if we do not live to enjoy the fruits of social and political perfection, at least we shall prepare them for our descendants. With this feeling, this perspective, what obstacles can be insurmountable?" She tells him too, with exultation, and "Bancal *must* realise the full bearing of the news," that Roederer, in a fine speech, had used the word "Republican" at the Jacobin Club without being hooted at—surely a big step in the right direction, especially when one realised that Billaud-Varenne had been howled down for using the same word four days earlier. Then she was glad to find that Brissot was not such a broken reed after all, for at a meeting of the Assembly he had actually undertaken to convince his audience that the doctrine of royal inviolability was false. He had stated that Monarchists and Republicans alike had come to desire a Constitution whose foundations were republican and whose forms were representative, and he illustrated his argument from English history, quoting the great English precedent

<sup>1</sup> July 6.



against the doctrine of royal inviolability. He proved to the apparent satisfaction of the Assembly that a King may be judged, and in this instance that a King should be judged. "He was," as Madame Roland says,

"no longer a simple orator, he was a free man defending the cause of humanity with the majesty, the nobility, the superiority of the very genius of Liberty. He convinced minds, he electrified souls, evoked what he willed—no ordinary applause greeted his words, but shouts, transport: three times the Assembly rose as one man, arms outstretched, hats waving in inexpressible enthusiasm. . . . At last I have seen the flame of Liberty kindled in our land—it cannot be put out."

The Assembly ordered Brissot's speech to be printed and distributed broadcast throughout the departments of France, a proceeding which sounds more complimentary than it really was, since nearly all speeches of any moment were circulated in this manner for the information of voters.

Madame Roland's life during the second week of July was full of incident. On the Monday, for example, she assisted at the funeral triumph of Voltaire. She thought it a good sign people should be so reverent, so moved, so deeply interested in "this belated act of justice to the great dead." "Surely," as she said, "one may be encouraged by watching the behaviour of this crowd." It seemed to her that it must mean that soon all the superstition and veneration that hedge hereditary Kings would disappear. On Wednesday in the same week, the eve of the great civic festival in honour of the fall of the Bastille, she went to the *Hierodrame* at Notre Dame.

This ceremony consisted of readings from the Bible, a recapitulation in saga fashion of the taking of the Bastille, a political sermon and a Te Deum. On Thursday she walked out like a good citizen to the Champs de Mars to take part in the Feast of Federation, an occasion on which Gobel, the Constitutional Bishop of Paris, was to celebrate Mass on the so-called Altar of the Country. The festival was a very dull affair, a marked contrast to that of the preceding year. Though tens of thousands of people were present, there was no excitement or fervour, no cheer for liberty, for country, for anything at all. What could such dullness mean? As Madame Roland wrote to a friend that evening, "The movements of public feeling and opinion are at all times difficult to gauge."

Ever since the Flight the Assembly had sat with closed doors discussing the measures to be taken in dealing with the King. No reporters were allowed inside the Riding School, the approaches to which were protected by soldiers. Few people knew what was really going on behind those barred doors, and it was a rude shock to representatives of fraternal societies bringing a Republican petition to the Assembly on the Feast of Federation to be summarily refused admission. In vain did the petitioners state "that they were part of the Sovereign which demanded to be heard by its delegates"; even this plea did not gain them admittance!

Madame Roland was desperately suspicious of the authorities, and convinced that some form of reactionary government was being concocted

behind those guarded walls, some kind of counter-revolution. On the morning after the festival she walked across the Pont Neuf, and noticed that the statue of Henry IV. had been decorated with flowers and that the head had been crowned with a wreath. She immediately jumped to the conclusion that this must be "the work of hirelings"; "that public affairs were once more drifting towards slavery"; that "the Assembly was capable of annulling the Declaration of Rights." In a measure her fears were justified, for that very day it became known to the clubs and fraternal societies of Paris that the Assembly had decreed that the King's person should be considered inviolable.<sup>1</sup> One can easily imagine what a stir this decision created in progressive circles. Danton, from his seat in the Jacobin Club, impetuously declared the decision to be *infâme*, which shocked and disgusted many conservative members, since it was a rule of the Society not to censure any decree resolved on by the Assembly. Danton's condemnatory words had grave consequences: the Club was split in two, and the very next day Barnave and the men who supported the decision of the Assembly walked out of the chapel in which the Jacobins sat, and, crossing the road, took possession of the church of the Feuillants, leaving the diminished Jacobins to their own devices. This new Club, known hereafter as the Feuillants, was really "the Constitution, the whole Constitution, and nothing but the Constitution Party." "Animals of all species took refuge in the sacred Ark of the Constitution," as a witty *bourgeoise* said at the time.

<sup>1</sup> Brissot, *Mémoires*, vol. ii. p. 281.

After this defection of conservative members, Choderlos de Laclos, the novelist, proposed that Danton's opinion should be enshrined in a resolution, and that the decision of the Assembly should formally be protested against by the Jacobin Club. This being agreed, Brissot, Danton, Lanthénas and three other members were commissioned to draw up a resolution, begging that the abdication of the King be accepted, and "his replacement by constitutional means arranged for."<sup>1</sup> Madame Roland's impatience with the Jacobins at this time makes one realise how tentative, how modest, were their proposals in the beginning. Their name has become synonymous with red revolution and anarchy, but their procedure in 1791 was that of feeling their way forward, and not of precipitating the nation into chaos. Just as the Jacobins were discussing the draft of their resolution, a mob from the Palais Royal arrived at the door. Its spokesman inveighed vehemently both against Louis XVI. as a person and against the decision of the Assembly on the question of his inviolability. He urged the Jacobins to go to the Country's Altar and swear to die sooner than recognise in treacherous Louis XVI. the inviolable King of France. On being told of the draft resolution at that moment under discussion, the deputation from the Palais Royal realised that it covered their motion, and withdrew from the precincts of the Club satisfied. Next morning many Jacobins assembled in their chapel to hear the resolution read in its approved form. After formally adopting it, steps were taken to

<sup>1</sup> Aulard, *Études et Leçons*, vol. iv. p. 160.



inform the municipality of Paris that the intention of the Club was to lay a resolution on the Altar of the Country for signature. Having received permission to do this, Danton and three other Commissioners, one of whom was an Englishman, went off to read the motion aloud simultaneously at the four corners of the Altar.<sup>1</sup> It was not well received : Republicans murmured ; Orleanists suggested amendments ; substitutions were proposed. The Commissioners protested against these amendments, and finally withdrew to their Club to discuss the obviously unacceptable resolution once again. Later in the day, on hearing that the King had been formally suspended by the Assembly until such time as the Constitution should be complete, they withdrew their resolution altogether.

On hearing of the King's suspension, Madame Roland called it "an indecent farce," and asked Bancal to try and imagine what indignation and discontent such a comedy would cause amongst the people. As a matter of fact, the people did not worry about it at all, for it was a compromise that met the situation admirably.

The Assembly ordered that the formal suspension of the King should be proclaimed in the public places of Paris at precisely eight o'clock on Sunday morning, the 17th of July, by the notables and beadles of the City Council, escorted by troops. Madame Roland, who was up and about betimes, says that the streets were full of cavalry, that there were rumours that Robespierre and other "patriots" had been denounced ; and

<sup>1</sup> July 16.



that she herself would not be surprised to learn at any moment of the assassination "of the few deputies who fight for the good cause." There was no doubt in her mind at all that Lafayette and the Assembly were plotting counter-revolution. "I find it impossible to depict our situation. I am enveloped by silent horror. My heart becomes more and more resolute in this sad and solemn calm; I am ready to sacrifice all sooner than cease to defend my principles. . . . I form no resolution but to give a great example."

The Champs de Mars was in a sense the Trafalgar Square of Paris, and on this same Sunday the Jacobins had arranged that a petition demanding the accelerated nomination of deputies for the new Assembly should be laid on the Country's Altar for signature. A practical joke turned this peaceable business into tragedy. A hairdresser and an ex-soldier had thought it would be great fun to go and hide under the planks of the Altar of the Country "pour regarder sous les jupes des femmes," so, on the Saturday evening, they supplied themselves with provisions and brandy, and, lifting one of the planks up, ensconced themselves below and spent the rest of the short July night in boring holes to peep through. People, especially those who had something to sell, began to arrive early in the morning. A cake and lemonade seller, wandering round the steps of the great Altar, looking for a pitch, suddenly felt an awl piercing her foot. She naturally screamed, and a young man who had come to copy patriotic inscriptions called for the guard, who, seeing nothing to come for, remained at a distance; the young

man then ran to the Hôtel de Ville and fetched some men with tools, who opened up the hollow base on which the Altar stood. The culprits pretended to be asleep, anyhow they reeked of brandy, and no mercy was to be hoped for at this time for any one who treated that symbol of patriotism, the Altar of the Country, with levity. The men were dragged out; somebody said they had put gunpowder under the Altar; a crowd collected, its temper became nasty, the guards were too few to protect the men; in a few minutes the practical jokers were hung, and by half-past eight their heads were being carried to the Palais Royal. According to Madame Roland it suited the Assembly and the Commune of Paris to assume the murdered men were National Guards and the murderers Republican democrats, and on this flimsy pretext martial law was voted, and proclaimed by the hoisting of a red flag at the Hôtel de Ville.

Madame Roland, who had walked to the Champs de Mars shortly after the murder of the hairdresser and the soldier, says there were only two or three hundred people there, but she noticed some guns arriving in the charge of three municipal officers, and wondered what they were to be used for. She recorded that the Jacobin petition in favour of accelerated elections to a new Assembly was well received when read aloud, and that officers of the National Guard told her they would have signed it themselves if they had not been on duty. Everything seemed peaceable enough, and when Madame Roland went back to an early lunch it appeared that even the guns were being withdrawn. Taking advantage of the probability



THE ALTAR OF THE COUNTRY



that people would be assembling in the Champs de Mars that day, two well-known Republican propagandists, M. and Madame Robert, took it upon themselves to draw up a petition of their own which they carried up to lay on the Altar about midday. The gist of their petition was "that a new constituent power should be convoked to proceed in a truly national manner to the judgment of the guilty, and above all to the replacing of the old and the organisation of a new executive power." Through the middle of that beautiful July day pretty Madame Robert stood there aloft, urging people to sign her petition. After two o'clock large crowds began to assemble. Many families made the Altar of the Country the object of their Sunday walk. Madame Condorcet was to be seen there with her little boy, and so was the painter David and many other well-known people. About 6000 people had climbed the pyramidal steps of the Altar and signed their names to one or other petition. Quantities more were waiting their turn. Suddenly ten guns appeared upon the scenes and were placed in front of the École Militaire, and since the red flag of martial law was flying at the Hôtel de Ville, they were able to fire into the harmless and peaceable crowd sitting on the steps of the Altar or clambering up to sign their names. It was said that information had reached the authorities that a Republican petition had been placed upon the Altar in direct defiance of their ruling, and that they had resolved to stand no fooling of the kind. It was also said that stones had been thrown at Lafayette, Mayor Bailly and some battalions of the National Guard.



The guns fired five or six rounds, cavalry galloped into the crowd brandishing sabres, bayonets bristled everywhere, the alarm was sounded simultaneously throughout the city. The Jacobin Club was invested, the Palais Royal suddenly swarmed with armed men. Wherever Madame Roland went that afternoon she saw "evidences of tyranny." The Assembly, of course, was still deliberating secretly, so there was no clue to anything that was happening. As Madame Roland hastily scribbled down scenes and facts as they occurred to her, it seemed as if in the future "the French nation, which had had so fleeting a glimpse of liberty, was to be governed by a Venetian Council of Ten and a King into the bargain." She dashed off to the Jacobin Club that evening to hear the events of the day discussed. Till she got there she had not realised how wholesale the secession of members to the Feuillant Club had been, and it profoundly disgusted her. When she got home at 11 p.m. she was surprised to find M. and Madame Robert, with whom she was barely acquainted, sitting in her parlour. They had come to ask for shelter. So many people were being arrested, they told her, and Madame Roland's reputation for patriotism was well known. When the firing began they had escaped, and now they dared not move. Though they were not safe guests to house at the moment, Madame Roland received them kindly, and ordered two camp beds to be made up in the *salon*, in which MM. Roland and Robert slept, while Madame Robert was given M. Roland's bed in Madame Roland's room. Madame Roland got up early to write letters, but

the Roberts were very lazy and dawdled over their dressing, and gossiped for a long time after breakfast. Then, very imprudently as their hostess thought for people in hiding, they went on to the balcony and called out to some friend passing in the street to come up and have a talk about all that had happened. Vachard, for this was the friend's name, boasted he had run his sword through a National Guard the day before, and Madame Roland requested M. and Madame Robert to send their friend away, as it was compromising to her and to Roland to receive such a person. So Vachard departed, and soon M. and Madame Robert also went out to see how things were going at their own home, promising to return to luncheon with the Rolands. Before three o'clock they turned up again, Madame with many feathers in her hat and much-rouged cheeks, Monsieur in sky-blue silk, on which his long curly black hair showed up well. He wore a long sword and was a very conspicuous figure, as like a courtier and as unlike a Republican as one could imagine. Both the Roberts seemed in very good spirits and talked gaily at luncheon of all that had happened, and then went off for a walk, and Madame Roland saw no more of them for the time being.

During the crisis caused by the so-called massacre of the Champs de Mars the Rolands tried to befriend Robespierre, for they well knew the panics of fear to which he was temperamentally liable. Hearing on the 19th of July that he was about to be arrested, they drove down to his lodging in the rue de Saintonge in the Marais at eleven

o'clock at night to offer him the shelter of their hotel. He was no longer there, and they found out afterwards that for two days past he had been lodging, or rather hiding, in the rue Saint Honoré with a retired carpenter called Duplay. The dark walk to his home in the Marais was very dangerous at night, and he had not been able to face it after the firing on the Champs de Mars.

The Government displayed mysterious and, as Madame Roland thought, misdirected activity. Things only came out by degrees, but she soon came to know that Marat, Hébert, Fauchet, Santerre and others were being watched, and that Danton, Camille Desmoulins, Fréron and Legendre had not thought it wise to go home for fear of arrest, and so had taken refuge with friends. And as she soon found out, there was cause for prudence, for the Cordeliers Club was shut and the door nailed up by order of the Government. Hawkers of *L'Orateur du Peuple* and *L'Ami du Peuple* were ordered to be arrested; many people were crammed into gaol, and, just as Madame Roland was writing to Bancal an account of these secret and invisible happenings, three carriages of prisoners passed her windows, and from one of the carriages looked out the face of the Cordelier editor, Marat.

There was a good deal to tell Bancal, for not only had the Assembly suddenly limited the freedom of the Press, but it had thanked the soldiers for the efficient way in which they had dispersed Sunday's crowd. It was utterly disheartening, and Madame Roland longed more and more to get back to her "trees"; "they are so much

better than all the stupid, cowardly people of Paris." "I am miserable here, I long to go away. . . . I dream only of seclusion and have no ambition but to enjoy it."

Since the majority of Jacobins had become Feuillants, Madame Roland felt that the dissolution of the parent Club must be imminent. Pétion, who hoped to see the Society rise from its own ashes with redoubled vigour, proposed that it should be still further purified by making a present of all timid and uncertain members to the Feuillants. Since no political club can be used as a lever on affairs unless its opinion be homogeneous, Pétion's proposition was accepted, and it was decided to proceed with the reformation of the Club. A committee of selection was appointed on which both Pétion and Robespierre sat. Since Pétion was indolent, Robespierre had things very much his own way, and was able to select members and reconstruct the Club as his own weapon. He had plenty of time for forging it as, being a member of the Constituent Assembly, he would be precluded from sitting in the next Assembly, and could look forward to a period of considered leisure. The provincial Jacobin societies affiliated to the parent clubs had not been disturbed by the Feuillant secession; so in the provinces the reformed Club was sure of support, while in Paris its ranks could at any moment be reinforced by association with the Cordeliers Club, which begged to ally itself with the reformed Jacobins. Madame Roland began to take heart on learning that the party of progress had its supporters as well as the party of reaction, but against



this consoling reflection had to be balanced the obvious fact that what she called the Royalists were still in power, for the red flag was flying, outdoor meetings were prohibited, newspapers censored. There was no getting away from facts of this sort. The one important thing, as Madame Roland constantly said to every one she met, was to stimulate a popular demand for accelerating the elections to the new Assembly, as evidently nothing could be done to change the complexion of the old. She appealed to all her friends, to Bancal, Champagneux, Lanthénas, Brissot, Bosc, to work on this line and this line only. It was to her judgment the only certain way of undercutting the Constitutionalists and their scheme for the permanent re-establishment of monarchy. A Long Parliament was every whit as dangerous to progress as the proscriptions of Scylla.

[The revision of the codified Constitution occupied the time of the Assembly during August. Lafayette's friend Ramond and a Committee, of which Buzot was a member, were responsible for the preparation as well as the co-ordination of the 3000 laws embodied in the new Constitution. This Committee had been at work for nearly a year, and the codification of laws gave a great opportunity to any one who chose to give the Constitution a more decidedly monarchical or republican twist. It was openly said that grave omissions had been made, and that the revision was a mere retrogression into royalism. Madame Roland frankly disapproved of the Constitution itself, and thought it a miserable compromise. She was always trying to work Buzot up to leaving his



mark on it, but he was very lazy and could hardly be prevailed upon to attend sittings on the subject at all, much less work at giving it a democratic twist. One of the measures of which she most disapproved was that investing the King with negative powers—"the suspensive veto"—by means of which he could postpone the execution of a law for three years. It also annoyed her to find that although the King was shorn of some of his authority, none of it had devolved on the people. There seemed to be no principle of movement in the Constitutional machine: it merely ground out a dull bureaucratic government for the country. The Assembly dwindled rapidly during its revision, fewer and fewer members attended; "patriots" were silent about it, but they were not inactive, for it was Robespierre and his friends who struggled at the cost of penalising themselves to prevent any member of the old being eligible for the new House. In other spheres, too, their influence was ponderable, as may be gauged by the mushroom-like growth of reformed Jacobin societies at this time.<sup>1</sup> Robespierre, Buzot, Pétion and Madame Roland comforted themselves by hugging a common conviction that since the Assembly did not make the Revolution, it could not unmake it. The force of public opinion and the pressure of events alone could do that, and so they concentrated their efforts on making it impossible for any Feuillants to sit in the new Assembly, and on the education of the people in the doctrines of self-government.

On the 7th of August the red flag, which had been flying at the Hôtel de Ville since the 17th of

<sup>1</sup> In July 400, in September 1000.

July, was replaced by a white standard. Things seemed once again quite normal. It became the fashion to "adore" the Constitution. Theatres drew large audiences, dances were given. After the anxieties of July every one was glad of this comparatively happy reaction. By the 1st of September the Assembly had finished its lengthy task of revision; the 3000 laws had been embodied in the Constitution somehow, and most people believed the end of the Revolution to be in sight. Madame Roland was delighted to realise that her friends had managed to influence the future course of events, firstly by proposing that no member of the Constituent should accept office under the Crown for four years after the time of the dissolution (at Buzot's instigation this period was shortened to two years<sup>1</sup>), and secondly by moving that no member of the Constituent should be eligible for a seat in the Legislative Assembly.<sup>2</sup> Both these motions were carried, and were the most deadly blow at Conservatism imaginable. Burke, on hearing that Parisians believed they had come to the end of their Revolution, said: "Alas! they little know how many a weary step is to be taken before they can form themselves into a mass which has a true political personality."

On the 3rd of September a deputation from the Assembly carried the completed Constitution to the King for approval. That evening Madame Roland left for Villefranche, and so was spared witnessing the outbreak of Royalist demonstra-

<sup>1</sup> This fell into disuse.

<sup>2</sup> Law of May 16, 1791. If it had not been for this law quite 200 members would have been re-elected according to Vaublanc, *Mémoires*, p. 181.

tions on the following day. On Sunday, the 4th of September, the Republican interim ended; the King became once more a King and not a prisoner; the Tuileries were thrown open; the Dauphin was exhibited by his mother to the people. The Royal Mass that morning was a most brilliant function, the music was superb, and as the King went to the chapel, shouts of "*Vive le Roi!*" were to be heard on all sides. One could not imagine that any such events as the taking of the Bastille or the escape had ever taken place. Another remarkable demonstration in favour of royalty took place on the 14th of September. The King, who had gone down to the Assembly to give his formal sanction to the Constitution, was received by seated and covered rows of members. But the same members who received him so coldly on his arrival accompanied him back to the Tuileries, shouting and cheering themselves hoarse. Certainly inconsistency, as Madame Roland had so often dismally remarked, was the keynote of public opinion.

On the last day of the month the Constituent Assembly, which had sat uninterruptedly for twenty-nine months, including holidays and Sundays, came to an end, and on the 1st of October 1791 the members of the new Legislative Assembly met together for the first time.

## CHAPTER IX

### A NEW FRIENDSHIP

“Nous faire connaître est un de nos plus grands plaisirs : voilà l'attrait des nouvelles amitiés.”—*Remarques et Pensées*, EUGÈNE MARBEAU.

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**M.** ROLAND had been unable to go with his wife to Villefranche on the 3rd of September, as business connected with the Lyons Council still kept him in Paris, but a new friend, Madame Grandchamp, was her travelling companion. This new friend was a charming woman, who “devoted herself to the cause of feminine education,” and “gave free courses in astronomy, grammar and literature to girls.” Her pupils liked her immensely, and were said to make astonishing progress under her guidance. Being a very dear friend of M. Bosc d’Antic, she had heard a great deal about the Rolands long before she met them, and had been not a little hurt that M. Bosc had not thought fit to introduce her to his other great woman friend when first she arrived in Paris in February. This omission was made good very late in the day, for only towards the middle of August 1791 did Bosc ask Madame Grandchamp whether she would come with the Rolands and himself to the Jacobin Club. She was about to refuse with dignity, but curiosity got the better of her and she consented to go. M. Bosc made his two friends acquainted with each

other by saying, "Here is an Athenian whom I present to a Spartan," a form of introduction which rather took Madame Grandchamp aback, as there were other people present. She tells us that never till her dying day could she forget the impression produced on her by Madame Roland.]

"I still see this celebrated woman sitting quietly beside a small table, in her amazon dress, her black hair cut *en jockey*, her bright colour, her sweet and penetrating eyes." Madame Roland's manner was absolutely charming; it seemed such a pity they could not stay at home and talk, it would have been so much pleasanter than going on to the Jacobin Club. However, there was no getting out of the debate, so Madame Grandchamp took care to sit beside Madame Roland at the meeting, for she could not attend to anything else. She was "absorbed," "charmed," "thrilled" by her new acquaintance. Madame Roland spoke so beautifully, expressed herself so well, and with such energy, which was all the more remarkable as her voice was "like a silver bell." At eleven o'clock Madame Grandchamp parted from her new friend and, quite fascinated by her personality, she tried to find her at home twice during the next few days, but without success. Her third effort, however, was rewarded by an interview, and Madame Grandchamp was able to pour a few gushing sentences of affectionate admiration into Madame Roland's ears. Madame Roland seemed embarrassed, constrained, unable to reply. Madame Grandchamp looked about her to see how it was that her advances were so ill received, and her eyes lit on M. Roland, whom she



had not noticed to be in the room. On his face she saw a caustic and disdainful smile. This expression exasperated her, and she left the apartment, meaning never to return. A few days later, Madame Roland rushed into Madame Grandchamp's rooms, and throwing her arms round her neck, kissed her, and apologised for her odd conduct of a few days before. She had come to explain herself; they must, of course, be friends, their souls were affinities. She had taken an immense liking to Madame Grandchamp, and could not understand why Bosc had not introduced them to each other earlier; they might have become so delightfully intimate during her stay in Paris. Spontaneously and warmly Madame Roland begged her new friend to go with her immediately to the country; at Clos alone would it be possible to cement their friendship. Madame Grandchamp, much taken by surprise at these overtures, spoke of difficulties which impetuous Madame Roland brushed on one side and said she would see to. But, objected Madame Grandchamp, what would M. Roland say? This objection was easily met by the assurance that M. Roland would be staying on in Paris for another three weeks.

Madame Grandchamp did not take the invitation very seriously till M. Roland himself called and begged her to go with his wife to Clos. Up to the very last moment she hoped there might be no seat for her in the diligence. And indeed there was no seat, and Madame Roland came to her, looking very miserable, to say that the coach was full. Walking up and down the room in a state of excitement, she begged Madame

Grandchamp to follow her at some later date, when suddenly she was struck by an idea. Of course, she could leave her maid to follow; she could quite well do without her for several days, and then they could both start that very night by the Lyons mail. Madame Grandchamp must come to supper at eight, and they would start at ten. With these words she rushed out of the room. Madame Grandchamp, rather carried off her feet by such enthusiasm, decided to take the maid's place, and from the moment they had fairly started on their long journey, she began to enjoy herself. Her companion was most agreeable. Part of every night was spent in talk. Madame Roland, who had never had a woman confidante since her marriage, poured out the secrets of years in these few days. She told this second "Sophie"—for they soon came to Christian names—all about her husband, her friends, her way of life, and this with a trustfulness that completely won Madame Grandchamp's heart. Sophie immediately began to devise means of making her brilliant, fascinating companion less unhappy; her own well-being in some strange way seemed to depend on doing so.

It took five days to journey from Paris to Lyons; the first three days, to Châlons-sur-Saône were done in a coach, and the next two by "water diligence" or boat. Madame Roland thought the diligence system very ill organised. Never were they able to get a proper night's rest, for the coach always started at 1 or 2 a.m., and they were provided with meals at extraordinary hours when no one felt inclined to eat, and often

they had to go hungry ; it was a real trial to her health. But though both ladies felt rather ill from the discomforts of the journey, they were, as Madame Roland wrote to her husband, so very gay and so deeply interested in their never-ending conversation, that discomforts did not really matter. Sophie Grandchamp, she added, has "an astonishing head," and is most amusing and delightful ; there cannot be another woman in the world with the same force of intellect. Wherever they halted, Madame Roland distributed or left behind copies of Robespierre's speech on the Champs de Mars incident. She was always a great believer in print and in the meditation which is induced by quiet reading. She had learnt practically everything she knew from books, and imagined that every one was like herself in this respect.

The travellers at last arrived, and disembarked at a little place called Riottier, on the Saône, the port of Villefranche. They were very tired when they stepped out on to the quay ; the weather was very hot, and it was not a little exasperating to find that, as it was a holiday, everybody was at the Montmerle fair farther up the river, and so that there was no cart to meet them. Canon Roland, however, who had come down to welcome them, was very pleasant, and seemed genuinely delighted to see them. Leaving the luggage in a shed, they walked up slowly in great heat to Villefranche, a distance of three kilometres. To Madame Grandchamp the Canon seemed a little pompous, a little patronising ; but once that had worn off she found him a "*galant homme*" and a very amusing talker. To Madame Roland this

return to Villefranche made her feel as if all "the sluggish stupidity of provincial life" had suddenly fallen about her head. She felt as if "buried in the void—in obscurity." The thoughtless Canon had not even had her rooms cleaned out for her; the second floor of the house was full of the most—horrible dust, and she had to arrange for cleaning it before going on to see Eudora at the convent. And even when she did go to see the child, she only meant to stop a minute and kiss her and promise to come and fetch her away the next day. There was so much to be done in the house to get it decently fresh and habitable for Sophie, and Eudora could wait. But Eudora refused to be neglected, and threw herself sobbing into her mother's arms, and succeeded in being taken home at once.

That evening the Canon, who did not take much interest in Parisian affairs or politics, told his sister-in-law how bad the summer had been for farming. It had been unusually dry and hot, the earth was baked into cracks, there was no grass, and salads, vegetables and fruits were all burnt up. Everything in the country round seemed dead, except the grapes, which happened to be exceptionally good, as is nearly always the case in a dry season. Madame Roland decided to go to Clos at once to see to the vintage, for after a scorching summer it is well to gather the grapes the moment they are ripe, lest the first rain rot them and make them fall. It was a relief to the lazy Canon to have his energetic sister-in-law to look after things for him, for he managed his own affairs very badly, and took no trouble at all about Clos.



Madame Roland's maid arrived four days later, which enabled the two ladies to set out for the farm. "It was in this rustic place, in this profound solitude," writes Madame Grandchamp, "that I realised the value of intercourse with this most attractive of women." The new friends did everything together: they saw to the vineyards, the farm, the animals; they visited the poor, and the time flew by in the most alarming way. In the summer evenings they walked on the hill-slopes and looked towards the mountains: one day they stood in half-awed silence at the beauty of the world, and the next they were full of gaiety and self-revelations. All too soon the three weeks flew by, and Roland came to interrupt the *solitude à deux*. He was always egoistic and liked talking of himself, but this time he seemed to claim more attention than ever. He asked Madame Grandchamp whether she knew his writings well, and appeared to be very much annoyed to think his wife had never spoken to her of them. He bored the poor woman dreadfully on the ensuing days by attaching himself to her for whole mornings together and talking of his work and of his determination to live in the country. He went so far as to hope that she might influence Madame Roland to accept this plan. Partly in order to get away from him, and partly because Sophie was an inveterate sight-seer, the two ladies made an excursion to Lyons to see the Library of the Academy, the beautiful Hôtel de Ville, the old church at Fourvières and the superb Roman aqueduct at Chaponost. They were perfectly happy so soon as they were alone,



and enjoyed their outing very much, but Roland rather naturally kept urging them to return.

“How much am I to be pitied,” said Manon to her friend; “the work to which I devote myself disgusts and exhausts me. Henceforward I shall be sequestered in the country, no distractions will ever again break the sad uniformity of my life or soften its secret pain. Why cannot I persuade you to spend your life here with me? I feel then that I could support the sacrifices imposed on me.”

[Madame Grandchamp loved her new friend dearly, but she loved some one else even more, and somehow the arrival of dreary M. Roland seemed to have broken the spell that made Clos so enchanting for her. It was as if scales had fallen from her eyes; she suddenly discovered that the country was stony, that sombre mists enveloped the mountains, that the rocky paths hurt her feet, that the house was uncomfortable and ugly. These discoveries determined her to refuse poor Manon’s invitation, but she consoled her disconsolate hostess as much as possible by promising that she would do her best to persuade Roland that it was all to his interest and advancement to live in Paris.

M. Roland at this time had just finished an article on “Furriery” for the Dictionary; he gave it to Madame Grandchamp and begged her to read it and make marginal notes upon it while he was away at Lyons on business.] “We are lost,” exclaimed Madame Roland as he left the house. “I know that manuscript by heart. Your notes, however kindly intended and softened down, will irritate Roland beyond bearing.” “All

right," said Madame Grandchamp, "then I won't make any." "Silence would be far more dangerous, for my husband would attribute it to incapacity, and this opinion would upset all our projects," sighed Manon. On hearing these words, Sophie set herself to get through the article, and, after making a few careful marginal notes on it, she read them to her friend, but so frightened was she of Roland's ill-temper, that she packed up her things and went away before he could get back from Lyons to learn what she had written. Roland was dreadfully annoyed by the notes when he read them; he was the sort of man who abhorred criticism and loved flattery. Manon wrote and told her friend how angry he was, and how dreadfully she missed her dear Sophie. Life was a desert without her. Sophie read the letter in tears: her poor, poor friend Manon, how much was she to be pitied.

Madame Roland had several reasons to be worried and depressed this autumn, for Roland had been deprived of his departmental appointment. One of the last acts of the Constituent Assembly had been to do away with the post of Inspector of Manufactures, and, in spite of his successful mission to Paris, he had also lost his seat on the Lyons Council. Most women dislike the idea of being married to men who have nothing to do, and poor Madame Roland was in despair over their future. She wrote a full account of her situation to Bancal the sympathetic. "Roland, having always been accustomed to work, will find the time hang very heavily on his hands," and she thinks that her whole life will have to be devoted

to his distraction, "a pitiful prospect when there is a child of ten to be educated." And besides, Roland's health would suffer; "all the activity which he has devoted to public affairs would become mere irritability in the home circle." "It is far from pleasant to lose 5000 francs a year straight off, with no promise of a pension, and that after nearly forty years' service." They are very, very poor, and she feels very, very helpless. The emptiness of provincial life, the parting from friends, the shutting down of that extraordinary interest in affairs, in hearing, in seeing, in doing of the last seven months, all contributed to make for great depression of spirits, great hopelessness about the future. In order to prevent herself sinking completely into a morass of self-pity she fixed her mind on politics, and wrote from the "end of the desert" to Robespierre "in the capital, the hearth of passion." She told him that had she only followed public affairs in the newspapers she would have been able to recognise men faithful to principles, and now that she had personally experienced all the horror and corruption of despotism on its defence, such men inspire her with deep admiration. Taken as a whole men were absolutely despicable, and there seemed to be only one way in which one could continue to work for the good of the race, and that was "in the way of Divinity," that is to say, "for the sheer delight of working for that end with no hope of recognition or gratitude." She told Robespierre that all the people she had met and talked to on her journey seemed ignorant or misinformed of the real trend of events in Paris, and

that though she had not dared express her opinions openly, she at least had left copies of his Champs de Mars address to the Jacobins in every place at which they halted.

It was extremely mortifying when they got back to Lyons and Villefranche to find that she and Roland were supposed to be counter-revolutionaries, and that their long absence in Paris was popularly assumed to be due to the imprisonment of Roland on this count. The Villefranche people had gone so far as to follow her down the street, crying, "*Les aristocrates à la lanterne!*" These experiences of provincial life destroyed any lingering impression Madame Roland had that persons are ever judged by the opinions they really hold. In their own country especially they are always the victims of opinions formulated against them. However many general truths were to be extracted from such experiences they in no way compensated for the annoyance of being unable to escape the foolish judgment of the mob.

After Madame Grandchamp's departure husband and wife sat down to discuss the future. It did not look very bright. Roland had absolutely nothing to do except go on with the Dictionary for Panckoucke. Clos did not belong to them, and, even if the Canon really gave it them, it could never be made to pay, so they talked over the possibilities of buying another estate which would bring them in enough to live on. Then there was the pension question to be thought of. As Madame Roland pointed out, after being for forty years a Government servant, one ought not



to allow oneself to be forgotten ; but yet how could one get at the right authorities without going to Paris ? [And again, how was poor, stupid Eudora ← to be educated except in Paris ? There was no disguising the fact that the child was uncommonly stupid and had no memory, and therefore that she needed very skilled teachers to develop her mind. Everything pointed to Paris, including inclination, and, after all, as Madame Roland said to placate her husband, it *might* only be necessary to stay there a few weeks, and then they might perhaps fall back on the old scheme of common life, buy Savigny, or Mortemer, or one of the many Church estates which Lanthénas was continually recommending to them. The essential and primary objective of a move to Paris was the securing of the pension, without which they could not live anywhere. They were terribly pressed for money ; bills which they could not meet kept coming in, and it was a serious matter that the chestnuts and dried plums that Madame Roland sold fetched such miserable prices at market, for she had counted on paying some of her bills in this way.

At last it was decided that they should go to Paris, and Madame Grandchamp was asked to secure an apartment for them in their old hotel and to order supper to be ready for them there on 15th December. Sophie was delighted to execute this commission. The Hôtel Britannique was close to her house, and it meant that she would see a great deal of her dear Manon. She followed the travellers' journey in her mind, as one does the route of a much-loved person, and became



more and more agitated at the thought of once more pressing Manon to her heart. One can imagine the blow it was to her to receive a little note from Manon asking her not to meet the travellers, as they would all be so very tired. Pride constrained her to stay at home, but affection soon overcame this pride, and she rushed round to the Rolands' rooms soon after their arrival. Roland was reading by the fire ; she greeted him warmly, but he hardly seemed to recognise her, and went on with his book. He had not yet got over her criticism of his article. Sophie then silently embraced Manon, whose eyes were red. Pressing Sophie's hand, she sighed deeply. Nothing at all was said, and so the visitor withdrew. On getting back to her home, she wrote a straight letter to Roland, rating him for his bad manners, and saying that though she has respect for his age, his virtues and his talents, she cannot forget that she owes something to herself, and that she does not intend exposing herself twice to such a reception. She felt relieved when she had packed off her maid with this note, and had just begun thinking out what the consequences of her action might be, when there was a knock on the door, and behold M. Roland, who had come round to apologise. From that outspoken moment they became friends, and Roland soon took to working as much in her room as in his own. Madame Grandchamp, for Manon's sake, undertook research work and copying for him, and became, in fact, a sort of private secretary, thereby relieving Madame Roland of a great deal of work. And, as is so often the case with an old man, he came to

look upon Sophie's time as entirely his own, and to make greater and greater demands upon her industry and good nature.

[The Rolands were destined to experience some rude shocks as they picked up the threads of their former Paris interests. They had only been away four months, and yet every one seemed to have changed, every one appeared to have forgotten them. For example, Pétion, who had been one of their most intimate friends in the summer, had now become Mayor of Paris. He was so grand that he had no time to take any notice of a poor provincial, and though Roland went to call on him, he never returned his visit. Naturally enough, Manon had also gone to call on her old friend, Madame Pétion, who had received her very coldly, and, merely escorting her to the door of the *salon*, had allowed her to walk out through the anteroom unaccompanied, a very rude thing to do. Madame Roland came back dreadfully cast down to think that Republicans could behave so, little guessing how sadly intimate she and Madame Pétion were destined yet to be. It was the same with everybody who held office. All the beggars on horseback behaved as they are popularly supposed to do. Roland's pride was intensely nettled by this behaviour, and he talked endlessly about going back to Clos. Manon entreated Sophie to dissuade him from this purpose, and Sophie could think of no expedient for keeping him in Paris but to get hold of Panckoucke, the publisher, and persuade him to give Roland some new work to do. Panckoucke, who had every reason to be satisfied with the painstaking, con-

scientific work Roland had already done for him, was pleased to offer him the editorship of *Le Journal des Arts Utiles*. In order to settle the matter definitely and irrevocably, Sophie went house-hunting for the Rolands, and on the 10th of March 1792 we find Roland signing the lease of a modest flat at 51 rue de la Harpe, for six years. The flat was on the second floor at the back of the house, and the rent was 450 francs a year. If it had been permitted to Madame Roland at this time to lift the curtain that screened the future from her eyes, she would never have consented to the taking of these rooms, for she would have seen herself installed in two short months' time at one of the most magnificent houses in Paris, the hotel of the great Calonne, and she would have known that out of the fourteen months' liberty left to her she would spend barely six in the rue de la Harpe.

Madame Roland had not even got her friend Buzot to fall back upon, for during her absence he had been appointed a criminal judge at Evreux. It made her smile to think of him presiding in the Cathedral, where the Court held its sittings, dressed up in a cloak and Henry iv. hat ornamented with three black ostrich plumes. It was not so distinctively a Republican get-up as one might have wished for a patriot, but still it gave him the chance of showing his Roman quality and temper of soul. Another old friend with whom the Rolands quite naturally tried to renew their former intimacy was Brissot, but he seemed difficult to get at, for the sittings of the Legislative Assembly and the organisation of a strong party there took up most of his time; but, unlike Pétion, he had not become

grand, and was most friendly and well disposed towards them, as they were soon to find out. Bosc, who had a genius for friendship, took much trouble in introducing Roland as a member of the Jacobin Club, of which at the moment Dr. Lanthénas was Vice-President<sup>1</sup> and Bancal Secretary. There at any rate Roland was among intimates, and by degrees he became accustomed to Paris life, and began to take a deeper and more active interest in politics than had been permissible in his bureaucratic days. The Jacobin Club met on two evenings a week at nine o'clock, and, whether they liked it or not, he expected Madame Grandchamp and his wife always to go there with him. He played a very quiet rôle in the Club, always listening and never mounting the Tribune, but as he had a reputation for industry and thoroughness, Bosc, when he became secretary of the Correspondence Committee of the Club, caused Roland to be made a member of the same committee, and a few days later to be nominated as his co-secretary. The Correspondence Committee dealt with all the four thousand and more Jacobin Associations then existing in France. The work was very heavy, and the new secretary brought a great mass of letters home with him, which Sophie and Manon helped him to answer and file. They found it a most amusing change after working for the Dictionary. So quickly did the trio get through the correspondence, that more and more work was laid on Roland. Madame Roland answered many of the appeals straight away "in what she hoped was a manner that would stimulate love of

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<sup>1</sup> In January 1792.

country.” It is rather curious to note that one of the charges brought against the Rolands at their trial was the illiteracy of the letters written by them at this time.]

Madame Roland worked hard in self-defence, for when she was *not* busy she was not even “half-happy.” Her health was wretched: she was the prey of melancholy, hopeless moods; she often contemplated suicide. Into Sophie’s discreet and sympathetic ear she poured out complaints; she was tired of life, tired of obscurity, tired of the Dictionary and, above all, tired of Roland. In the words of to-day, she was unspeakably bored with her lot in life; she hated the sort of poverty to which they were reduced, and resented the success of the men who had been as insignificant as themselves but six months previously. She was jealous of every one. It does not require great insight to understand the poor woman’s state of mind—a state which unforeseen circumstances were very effectually to banish.



## CHAPTER X

### POLITICS AND DIPLOMACY

“Il y a beaucoup de cages où sont des oiseaux qui étaient faits pour voler très haut.”—*Mélanges et Lettres*, XIMENES DOUDAN.

**I**N order to keep herself from brooding over the emptiness of her private life, its failure, its utter hopelessness, Madame Roland spent some of her spare time at the Legislative Assembly. It really roused her from her lethargy to listen to the discussions there, and she felt always that all observation was to the good so far as the storing up of experience went, though just occasionally she was tempted to give up preparing herself for a great future. It seemed so impossibly remote at times. How could any one think there was any future for a man like her old husband, the better one knew him the more ridiculous it seemed; and yet, somehow, she could not abandon all hope of playing a significant rôle on the world's stage, and so continued to make herself read books and observe men and affairs. 2

On the whole, the ways of the Legislative Assembly pleased her more than the ways of the Constituent Assembly had done. The general tone was less indifferent, divergent views were aired, there was a healthy conflict of opinions. In fact, though falling far short of the ideal Parliament of which Madame Roland dreamed, it was more

alive and progressive than anything that had gone before.]

The new Assembly sat, as the old had done, in the Riding School, and when Manon went to this place for the first time after her return from Clos she saw before her a sea of strange faces. The 1150 Constituents, who had been more or less known to her and to the people of Paris, had vanished from the floor of the House, though a few lingered on as jeering spectators in the galleries. Most of the 745 new members were inexperienced men of under thirty, who had been elected for the express purpose of working a Constitution they had taken no part in framing. The great majority of them had been put forward, or at any rate protected and "run" in the provinces, by the Jacobin Club, which in this instance proved itself so powerful a political organisation as to influence municipal authorities to close all royalist clubs during the elections in the interests of public order.<sup>1</sup> It soon became evident in this new Assembly that the old fight for principles was to give way before the new fight for ascendancy, for power, and the simple device of placing the Tribune just in front of the President and not facing him, as had formerly been the case (in order to make the Right and Left of no political significance), was not enough to prevent the formation of parties or to keep the Assembly united. The President, since he was in office but a fortnight at a time, had practically no control over members, and at first it disgusted Madame Roland to note how disorderly the proceedings were, as well as to see idle ex-members

<sup>1</sup> Gomél, *Histoire financière de la Legislative et de la Convention*, p. 4.

of the Constituent Assembly looking down from the galleries, making suggestions and poking fun at the novices in legislation who had succeeded them.

After a time, however, she began to feel at home among the new members, and with the assistance of Brissot and her husband was able to analyse and distinguish the actual composition of the Assembly. She found, rather to her disappointment, that there was still a Conservative Wing or Right, composed of about 250 Constitutional Royalists or Feuillants, led by Vaublanc, Mathieu Dumas, Ramond, Théodore de Lameth and Stanislas de Girardin, all mediocre men; a Centre, led by Pastoret and other persons whose names are even less familiar, consisting of about 250 deputies, who usually voted with the Right; a Left, consisting of from 200 to 250 persons who called themselves "Jacobin-Patriots." This Left, of course, was the group that attracted all Manon's interest and sympathy. By their enemies the members of it were variously styled "Brissotins," "Bordelais," "faction Guadet-Brissot," and the actual deputies from Bordeaux were known as "Girondins." The leaders of the Left were Brissot, Vergniaud, Guadet, Gensonné, Louvet and others whose names are as familiar as the names of the Centre are unfamiliar. Without question the talent of the Assembly was concentrated in the Left, and Brissot, who, like Madame Roland, was a great admirer of English methods, did his best to transform this Left from a group to a party in the English sense, to Manon's great satisfaction. To this end he arranged that the Bordeaux deputies should foregather with Condorcet, Clavières and other so-

called Brissotins at breakfast at the house of a rich widow, Madame Dodun.] This house was in the Place Vendôme, a stone's-throw from the Riding School, and Guadet, Gensonné, Vergniaud, Ducos, Condorcet, Fauchet and other like-minded people met there constantly to discuss party tactics and organisation, as well as foreign and domestic affairs. Soon after Roland arrived back in Paris from Clos, Brissot, with Madame Roland's warm approval, invited him to these breakfasts, thus ear-marking him as a member of their party. Meetings of a similar composition also took place three times a week at Vergniaud's house, as well as at the house of Valazé. One of the charges brought against the Gironde, when on its trial, was that it had deliberately set itself to create factions by means of these meetings; that it behaved as a party, voted as a party, and, worst of all, issued "whips" to its members.

Madame Roland, on turning her attention from the Assembly to the Executive Council, in whom the control of affairs was nominally vested, was somewhat surprised to find how weak in composition it was. As far as she could gather, it contained no man of any eminence. Duportail, the Minister for War; Bertrand de Molleville, Minister of Marine; Duport Dutertre, Minister for Justice; Cahier de Gerville, Minister for Home Affairs; Lessart, Minister for Foreign Affairs; and Tarbé, Minister of Finance, were mere figure-heads and completely under the King's control. It seemed to Madame Roland that they had no particular policy; that they might drift, for example, unprepared into a most bloody war, or

find themselves betrayed to Austria. The King, she divined, was playing a waiting game, and it suited him to be civil and charming with his Ministers, though somewhat procrastinating in business. It was obvious to her that he meant to bring about armed intervention somehow, though he had complicated matters for himself by accepting the Constitution; but then, as she surmised, he must be relying on his wife, who was not sister to the Emperor of Austria for nothing. If Madame Roland had known how busy the Queen, Madame Campan<sup>1</sup> and Mercy Argenteau<sup>2</sup> were at this very time in carrying on a cipher correspondence with the Emperor of Austria, by means of numbers and of a copy of *Paul et Virginie*, she would indeed have been alarmed. If she had known that the Queen, just before the opening of the Legislative Assembly, had warned her friends abroad not to be taken in by her apparent satisfaction with the Constitution, and that both the King and Queen had later made a request<sup>3</sup> to the Germanic Powers to pay no attention to their *official* acts or their *public* demands, she would have been madly indignant; but although Madame Roland suspected Marie Antoinette of frankly longing for invasion or armed intervention to free her from an intolerable situation, she had no evidence of her treachery; to outward seeming both the King and Queen were the best of Constitutionals or Feuillants.

Haunted by the memory of ancient virtue enshrined in Plutarch's pages, Madame Roland was sometimes inclined to believe that, even out

<sup>1</sup> Lady-in-waiting to the Queen.

<sup>2</sup> Austrian Ambassador in Paris.

<sup>3</sup> Week of December 3.



of such evil as foreign intervention, good might come. The moral possibilities opened up by war, however it were brought about, seemed to her tremendous. Out of the innumerable opportunities of self-sacrifice and heroism, which any war offers, a great nation might be welded together—a new people no longer indifferent to the public welfare, but enthusiastic for progress and good government.

→ In the minds of other of Madame Roland's contemporaries the same problem was producing various solutions. For example, an unknown lawyer, Jacques Danton, who had been elected to the Paris Commune the week before the Rolands arrived in Paris, spoke thus on the question of war : " We must guard ourselves against the party that wish to profit by a universal war, who wish to endow us with the British Constitution, in the hope of soon being able to substitute for it the Government of Constantinople." After this hit at the Constitutional Royalists who saw in foreign intervention the only way of re-establishing Monarchy in its old absolutism, he went on to say : " I will that we have war : it is indispensable, we shall be obliged to have war, but first we must exhaust every means of avoiding it." <sup>1</sup>

Like Bismarck at a later time, Madame Roland and Danton came to look to war as the uniter of a nation, as the only possible means of achieving a " patria." Robespierre, on the other hand, saw nothing in war but danger to the democratic cause, and told his hearers at the Jacobin Club that, whether successful or unsuccessful, it must end

<sup>1</sup> Chap. xiii. p. 1.

either in Military Dictatorship or in betrayal to the enemy, and in either case prove the downfall of Liberty.

It is always difficult to gauge the secret diplomacy, the foreign policy of a government by its overt acts. Madame Roland tried to make out which way things were really trending on the question of invasion by noting carefully the measures adopted to disperse the *émigrés* on the frontier. They constituted a standing menace to the peace of the country and were only awaiting a signal from Austria to leap forward to the rescue of the King. On the 31st of October the Legislative Assembly had ordered the Comte de Provence, "Monsieur," to return to his country. On the 9th of November French persons assembled on the frontier were warned that, unless they had returned to France by the 1st of January, they would be suspected of plotting against their country. The King chose to veto these particular decisions, but no amount of vetoing could stem the tide of public opinion which was beginning to set ominously against him and his policy of procrastination. Public opinion demanded that the *émigré* question be cleared up: were they or were they not the enemies of new France, and consequently the champions of absolute monarchy? By the 16th of December Louis XVI. was obliged to announce to the Assembly <sup>1</sup> that the Elector of Trèves had been informed that, if the *émigrés* congregated under his protection were not dispersed by the 15th of January, he would be treated as an enemy. On hearing of this ultimatum the Emperor Leopold of Austria,

<sup>1</sup> An announcement repeated more emphatically on December 31.

advised by Kaunitz, immediately announced that he would support the Elector of Trèves. It certainly appeared as if the Government in its effort to deal with the *émigré* menace were steering the country into war, and many persons besides Madame Roland felt that the poor amateur Lessart was quite incapable of handling a situation which required the highest address and tact. When Kaunitz' overbearing dispatch to de Noailles, the French Ambassador in Vienna, defining the intention of Austria with regard to Trèves, was published in all the Paris newspapers,<sup>1</sup> it occasioned an absolute uproar. One feels that it may not have been the height of wisdom to have a leading editor as Chairman of the Diplomatic Committee of the Assembly, and anyhow, as Brissot himself confessed later on, "In forcing on a declaration of war, I had in view the abolition of royalty."<sup>2</sup>

A few days before the publication of the Austrian dispatch, Brissot had said in the Assembly<sup>3</sup> (and though the words are spoken by him, one feels sure of the origin of his inspiration), "It is by force of reasoning and by force of facts that I have persuaded myself that a people which has won freedom after ten centuries of slavery needs war. They need war to consolidate them; they need war to purge away the vices of despotism; they need war to drive out the men who might corrupt them."<sup>4</sup> And again a little later he spoke in favour of an offensive and immediate war, and

<sup>1</sup> On December 21.

<sup>2</sup> Pamphlet by Brissot, October 1792, *A tous les républicains de France, sur la Société des Jacobins de Paris*.

<sup>3</sup> December 16, 1791.

<sup>4</sup> *Orateurs de la Révolution*, vol. i. p. 247.

in some mysterious manner the country itself came to want war. Who shall say that the network of Jacobin Clubs all over the country was not responsible for this conversion, or that the Correspondence Committee inspired by Madame Roland had not done a good deal to promote the war fever? Brissot's two great interests in political life were war and the emancipation of the negroes; his great speeches were made on these subjects. We may note in passing that they also were two of Madame Roland's chief concerns, and that she had discussed both these great issues over and over again with Brissot. On 29th December philosophic Condorcet, who was the official mouthpiece of the Brissotin or, as we may now call it, the war party in the Legislative Assembly, was put up to read before a full House a declaration he had drawn up, which it was proposed should be made to Europe. In this declaration it was stated that the French nation, though it might be forced to go to war, would fight for defensive ends and without desire of conquest. Even though it were constrained to make war on kings, it would not make it on peoples. This amiable declaration meant nothing in particular, as it is not humanly possible, so long as dynasties exist, to make war on kings without involving a proportion of their subjects. The enthusiastic unanimous applause of the Assembly showed how well Condorcet expressed the sentiment, if not the intelligence, of the House.

In view of ultimate possibilities, the new War Minister,<sup>1</sup> Narbonne, who was "Brissotin" in so

<sup>1</sup> Appointed December 7.

far as his desire for war went, though he welcomed it not to establish democracy but to restore royal prestige, made a Christmas inspection of the frontier, accompanied by his friend, Madame de Staël. Madame Roland was relieved to learn that the Government had thought it necessary to send a Minister to see into affairs, to report on deficiencies and to make some preparation for the war that now seemed to her unavoidable ; it did something to restore her confidence in the Administration. When Narbonne came back to Paris he made the usual report,<sup>1</sup> for he had the characteristic of cheerful and groundless optimism common to most War Ministers in peace time. According to him the fortifications were in a satisfactory state, the fortresses were well provisioned, the artillery good and supplied with plenty of ammunition. He admitted cheerfully that the troops were 50,000 below strength, but that was because recruits for the regular army had become impossible to obtain owing to the superior attractions of the volunteer forces. He further reported that he had arranged for Generals Rochambeau and Lückner to be proclaimed Field-Marschals at Metz, and that he had conferred both with these officers and with Lafayette. What passed at this conference he naturally could not reveal to the Assembly, but at any rate he was in a position to tell the House the actual state of the armies from Dunkirk to Besançon.

There were provisions for 230,000 men and 22,000 horses for six months, artillery for an army of 200,000 men, and remounts and hospitals

<sup>1</sup> On January 11.



in plenty. It was a reassuring account and gave members listening to him a pleasant sense of security and readiness. Three well-organised armies—that of the North or Flanders, under Marshal Rochambeau;<sup>1</sup> that of the Centre or Metz, under Lafayette;<sup>2</sup> that of the West or Alsace, under Marshal Lückner<sup>3</sup>—were ready, he assured his hearers, to take the field. It all sounded very well, but when we come to analyse Narbonne's figures we see that there were only 90,000 men available for the field armies altogether. In addition to these troops there were about 4000 national guards. The estimates provided for 400,000 men, but no doubt existed in the minds of members that on the outbreak of hostilities volunteers would come forward in large numbers and so bring the army up to its nominal strength. No member of the Legislative Assembly had any personal experience of war, for France had been at peace for thirty years, but they light-heartedly faced the possibility of war, knowing that between six and nine thousand regular officers had emigrated, and that the old professional army had been diluted with many battalions of untrained volunteers. On the evening of the day on which Narbonne made his report Robespierre spoke bitterly against war at the Jacobin Club, holding the War Minister to be no better than a traitor. He was howled down by Brissot's sup-

|                                     |   |   |                                               |
|-------------------------------------|---|---|-----------------------------------------------|
| <sup>1</sup> 25,702 garrison troops | } | = | 54,623 garrison troops.<br>88,923 field army. |
| 33,000 active „                     |   |   |                                               |
| <sup>2</sup> 15,316 garrison troops |   |   |                                               |
| 28,923 active „                     |   |   |                                               |
| <sup>3</sup> 13,605 garrison troops | } |   |                                               |
| 27,000 active „                     |   |   |                                               |

porters, an insult he never forgave and lived to revenge.

No person of any weight or eminence in Europe really believed that France could be so mad as to declare war on Austria; foreign statesmen thought it would be nothing less than national suicide to do so. The Empress of Russia contemptuously laid wagers that 8000 men would be ample to reduce France to order, but neither she nor the astute Kaunitz, relying as he did on the disorganisation of the French armies, ever dreamt of such a thing as national resistance to invasion, or for one moment apprehended the new forces of liberty with which they would have to reckon.

After receiving Narbonne's satisfactory report, the Brissotin party in the Assembly forced the pace that the Executive vainly tried to slacken. It was not for nothing that Brissot was Chairman of the Diplomatic Committee, and that De Lessart was completely inexperienced and constitutionally incapable of dealing with any crisis. Some of the steps in the crisis precipitated by the Brissotins are still discernible. On the 25th of January, on the motion of Hérault de Séchelles, the Assembly decreed that "the Emperor of Austria be invited to declare that he renounces any act hostile to the independence or the sovereignty of the French nation." The immediate response to this motion was that 30,000 Austrian troops under Hohenlohe were moved to the Low Countries,<sup>1</sup> and further, that Kaunitz, after concluding an offensive alliance with Prussia, wrote the famous dispatch <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> February 9.

<sup>2</sup> Delivered Paris, February 27.

in which he severely criticised the management of home affairs in France, attributing the cause of her disorders "to the influence and violence of the Republican party," and calling on the French nation to free itself from men who desired to plunge Europe into war. This dispatch was read by Lessart in the Assembly<sup>1</sup> to a highly disapproving audience. The general impression among members was, that even Kaunitz could not dare to lecture the French nation in this impudent way unless he had some secret understanding with Lessart or "the Austrian Committee," as the Queen's friends, the ex-members of the Constituent Assembly—Barnave, Thouret, Adrien Duport, Alexandre de Lameth—were called.

Things began to look so serious after the reception of this dispatch that Narbonne summoned Lieutenant-General Dumouriez to confer with the Executive in Paris about preparations for the almost inevitable war. Dumouriez was very popular with the war party in the Assembly, as Narbonne knew, and most of the legislators placed great faith in his ability as a soldier. Brissotins, in fact, longed to appoint him to high command, should they be in office. Really he had no serious rival in public estimation, for Lafayette, whose last exploit had been to stand against Pétion as candidate for the office of Mayor of Paris, was universally distrusted, Lückner was a Prussian, and Rochambeau was old, as well as ill with dropsy. Narbonne, after discussing plans of operations with Dumouriez at the War Office, informed him that he would be appointed to command the

<sup>1</sup> March 1.

Besançon division in Lückner's army. Dumouriez accepted this command with becoming gratitude, but, in order to gain time for purposes of his own (and we must not forget his talent for intrigue), he put forward a suggestion that if there was to be war at all it probably would be universal, and that as far as he knew no precautions had been taken about the South, where they might be taken by surprise. He submitted that it would be well to draw up a scheme of defence for the South, and to allot an army to carry it out. Narbonne approved of this suggestion, and told Dumouriez to work out the scheme; he did so, and at the end of three days presented it to his chief. Hardly had he done this than Narbonne was summarily dismissed by the King and replaced by an inexperienced and unknown young man called De Grave. What was the meaning of this dismissal, Madame Roland wondered. Could it signify that by some mysterious machinations the peace party had gained the day, or did it mean that Feuillant Ministers saw in zealous Narbonne a great danger to themselves? After all no Feuillant could want the war to go too well for France, for if Austria and Germany were beaten it inevitably meant the downfall of monarchy. Whatever the War Minister's motives for preparation and activity were, he had shown unbecoming zeal and too much sympathy with the Brissotins to please either his colleagues or the King. Then his ideas of defence did not coincide with those of the Minister of Marine, or indeed with the views of the Queen, who wished to make things as easy as possible for her allies. For these reasons Madame

Roland concluded it had become necessary to Monarchists to replace him.

And indeed it was obvious that the King and Queen, from their own point of view, should wish to keep the Executive Council composed of weak and inefficient Ministers. A definite policy was the last thing they wanted, and Narbonne was becoming in their eyes a public danger. So, as Madame Roland found out later, it was intimated to subservient Ministers that Bertrand de Molleville should ask Louis XVI. to replace <sup>1</sup> Narbonne in his office of Minister for War by some one less quarrelsome, less hot-headed, such as De Grave. The King, therefore, in the most constitutional manner in the world, carried out the wish of the majority of his Ministers, and gave de Grave the portfolio for War. At first sight it seemed as if he had really given a knock-out blow to the war party, but Brissot's resources were by no means exhausted. He had another bomb-shell ready for the Conservatives. Under his Chairmanship the Diplomatic Committee of the Assembly had set to work to deliberate on the Lessart-Kaunitz correspondence, and on the 10th of March, the day on which the change of War Ministers was to be officially announced, his report on it was ready to present to the Assembly.

Every one in the Riding School was discussing two important pieces of news on the morning of the 10th of March: the sudden death of the Queen's brother, the Emperor of Austria, and the unaccountable dismissal of Narbonne. Had they anything to do with each other, and

<sup>1</sup> Sorel, vol. ii. p. 389.



what did it all mean in terms of international politics ?

The sitting began, and hardly had the President read the King's official communication about the change of War Ministers, than protests were heard from all parts of the House. The Left promptly passed a vote to the effect that Narbonne took with him the regrets of the Assembly. Then, the report of the Diplomatic Committee on the Lessart-Kaunitz correspondence being presented, Brissot went to the Tribune and delivered his new attack on the Government, which consisted of a formal impeachment of Lessart on thirteen counts. He had nothing to go on save suspicions, but, as Vergniaud said, "Presumptions are enough for an act of accusation." The presumptions in this case were well founded, for Kaunitz' bullying dispatch had been inspired in Paris. The judgment of the Queen and of her advisers on current affairs and on the temper of the French nation was always wrong ; such dispatches or manifestos as she inspired were invariably ill-judged and inopportune.

The Ministry, with the exception of newly appointed De Grave, resigned on the impeachment of Lessart, and the King, nothing daunted, at once appointed General Dumouriez as Minister for Foreign Affairs, Lacoste as Minister for the Navy, and then left the formation of the rest of the Government in the hands of the newly made Foreign Minister.

On assuming the leadership, Dumouriez proceeded to ask the "Gironde," which really meant Brissot and Guadet, to point out suitable persons

for the Cabinet ; they agreed to discuss possible appointments with the Committee of the Place Vendôme, and to report its recommendations. The General meanwhile went off to the Jacobin Club, where, in order to convince “ patriots ” of his good faith, he put on a red cap and embraced Robespierre. It was highly important for him to secure the support of this organisation, which was rapidly becoming the greatest power in the land.

Possible ministerial appointments were meanwhile debated at a lengthy sitting at Madame Dodun’s house. It was not easy to find Ministers, as no member of the Assembly was eligible for the position. Just to illustrate the difficulties of selection, it was discovered that no one could put forward the name of a single man in Paris who was suitable to be Minister for Justice. Lanthénas, who was a very steady attendant at these informal committees, suggested that Roland might be a suitable candidate for some office. Every one present agreed that Roland was an enlightened and upright man, that it would be a safe kind of appointment ; but that his austerity of manner and character did not make it likely he would get on well with the King or his colleagues. Owing to the scarcity of suitable men, these objections were overcome, and the Place Vendôme Committee agreed to put Roland’s name forward for office, as well as that of Brissot’s cousin, Clavières. To some people it has appeared very odd that an Inspector of Commerce should be made Minister of the Interior, but when we come to appreciate facts and circumstances as they were at the time,

it does not seem at all odd. Ministers, as we know, had to be sought for outside Parliament, most of the better known Constitutionalists had seats in the Assembly, and other distinguished persons like Pétion and Roederer already held administrative posts. The choice of safe men was very restricted; every one seemed so young, so unknown, so inexperienced, that it was a relief to secure a reasonable old man like Roland for office; at any rate, it was unlikely he would land the Government in difficulties; the worst that could be feared for him was that he would turn out nothing but a bureaucrat. Roland himself had no idea that Lanthénas was putting his name forward for office, and was discussing the possible men for the new Ministry with Madame Grandchamp at the very moment that his nomination had been decided on; he had even ended with these words: "At any rate, my own obscurity saves me from the fear of election, and in these circumstances I bless it." Brissot went round to see Madame Roland the day before the appointment was to be announced, and told her that they were thinking of appointing her husband to the Government. She laughed, and asked him why he should make such a joke. Brissot told her he was quite serious, and took his leave. When Roland came in he was annoyed to have missed Brissot, and only to get a repetition of his conversation from his wife, but remarked that the men in office were so mediocre that he was not afraid of following them, though, of course, the situation in itself was critical enough, and required a good man to deal with it.



BRISOT

*From a portrait by Billiard*





On the 22nd of March Dumouriez, accompanied by Brissot, came to the Hôtel Britannique at eleven in the evening, and informed Roland that he had been appointed Minister of the Interior by the King, and that he was to receive the portfolio of Cahier de Gerville the next day. Roland affected unwillingness to accept the office, and begged to be given ten hours in which to consider his decision. Dumouriez agreed to this condition, and left him. Directly the Foreign Minister had gone, Roland wrote a note to Madame Grandchamp telling her what had happened, and begging her to come round at once and talk things over. She was in bed when the note arrived, and refused to go and see her friends till the following morning. During the night, however, she considered the whole situation, and decided to advise them to accept the responsibility of office. [Roland had a great deal of experience in commercial, agricultural and manufacturing affairs, and would probably carry out his official duties as well if not better than most people, and as far as her poor friend Manon was concerned, any change must be for the better, as her health and spirits were so miserable that Sophie felt convinced that she must cherish a secret ambition for power and place.] She also knew that Manon found it impossible really to forgive the neglect and ingratitude of those persons whose pen she had guided, whose policy she had inspired a few months earlier, and would be glad to be, as it were, "even" with them. [And, beyond and above these miserable personal considerations, she knew that Manon had an overmastering desire to be of some help

to "*la chose publique*," to get the chance of manifesting patriotism on the grand scale.

Directly daylight came, Madame Grandchamp ran round to the Rolands' apartment, and found that neither of them were up. ] Sitting down on Roland's bed, she cried with excitement. "I lose you, I lose you for ever," she sobbed. "Forgive me if this thought makes me indifferent to the honours which await you." Roland leant forward and squeezed her hand, and told her they needed her more than ever, both for the sake of friendship and for the sake of their new work. He went so far as to tell her that he had already planned out ways in which she might be of assistance to them, and that, since she had "always been accustomed to court and social life," he was going to arrange for her to deal with that aspect of his public duties, and in addition to fulfilling her rôle as Mistress of the Ceremonies he hoped that she would make extracts from all newspaper articles concerning him and his department. These extracts he proposed to run over every morning on waking and decide if any action was to be taken upon them. Madame Grandchamp was rather taken aback at the man's egotism, and at the calm way in which he appropriated her services, and she hesitated for some minutes before answering. The Rolands were dreadfully hurt by this hesitation, and so, in order not to spoil a very happy occasion, she felt obliged to give a smiling but unwilling consent to these inconsiderate demands on her time, talents and good nature.

Presently this bedroom conversation was interrupted by the arrival of a deputation of women

from the Markets. Would dear Sophie go out and oblige them greatly by playing the part of Madame Roland, and they would dress as quickly as they could, in order to receive the next batch of callers. The market-women were very noisy, and expressed delight at having a patriot Minister with such a public-spirited wife to support him. After the deputation had been disposed of, Madame Grandchamp was approached by the landlady of the Hôtel Britannique ; it seemed that now she could not do enough for guests whom she had hitherto treated so scurvily. Might she not put the first floor at the disposal of the Rolands ? Madame Grandchamp accepted the offer on her friends' behalf, and then went out to do a number of tiresome commissions for her friends. Nobody could have been more surprised than she was on coming in at seven o'clock that evening after a very tiring day, to find Manon, who for weeks had been pining away, looking fresh, animated and beautiful. The apartment to which the Rolands had been transferred on the first floor of the hotel was full of Ministers, deputies, courtiers. Madame Grandchamp crept into the room unobserved, and sat herself down in a corner, the better to note what was going on. Two footmen stood at attention in the anteroom, and opened one or two halves of the doors into the *salon*, according to the rank of the person who entered. Sophie rubbed her eyes ; could she be dreaming ? Last night there lived in a little room on the third floor back a man who did not know where to turn for money, and a miserable woman who longed to end her life, and now there were two smiling, prosperous people

standing before her, holding a levée of distinguished persons in a beautiful suite of apartments. It was exactly like a fairy-tale, Sophie said to herself as she crept quietly home.

The next morning Roland took the oath of allegiance and received the portfolio for Home Affairs at the hands of the King. He was a little mortified to notice that his appearance caused some amusement in the Royal entourage. He wore his ordinary costume, "that of a philosopher," as Manon is careful to tell us; but his Quaker felt hat, his thin grey hair carefully combed over his venerable head, his shoes fastened with laces, amused the "valets of the court." One of them whispered to Dumouriez, "No buckles on his shoes?" Dumouriez threw up his eyes, saying, "All is then lost," which made every one laugh. Men saw an impersonal Quaker-like being accepting a portfolio that day, but they did not see that his real significance and virtue lay in the strangely personal influence of his wife, the woman who already had made herself the inspirer, the Egeria of Brissot and his men. How little did King, Queen or Cabinet guess that it was a woman and not a man who had stepped into office that March day of 1792. Every one was destined to realise the fact later on, for when Roland escaped and Madame Roland was engaoled, men wittily said, "They have lost the body, but they have caught the soul." It was the woman and not the man who broke up this first Girondin Ministry. It was she who, after its dissolution, inspired Pétion, Buzot, Barbaroux, Brissot, Servan, to mirror her ideas, her enthusiasm, her prejudices, her hates. It



was she who produced Cabinet crises. The letter to the King, the formation of a Federal Army, the split with Danton, the attack on Robespierre, were her ideas, and in the end it was she who pulled the ruins down about Girondist heads. It was she who conceived the idea of carrying into practice a homogeneous Cabinet resting on a parliamentary party. Her acquaintance with precedent, with affairs generally, was more considerable than that of Roland. She could invariably supplement her husband's political and historical knowledge; she had ideals she wished to realise; she asked nothing better of life than real power without either the substance or the responsibility of it. "My wife is no stranger to the business of my office," said Roland to Barras, who was astonished at her presence in the ministerial bureau. Her influence on the Ministry through Roland, the influence of a passionate and intensely personal woman, gave new life at first to the proceedings of the Council. For a while she seemed to sweep all before her.

The Brissotin Ministry consisted of five members: Dumouriez, Minister for Foreign Affairs; De Grave, Minister for War; Lacoste, Minister of Marine; Clavières, Finance Minister; Roland, Minister for Home Affairs. The Minister of Justice being as yet unchosen, Roland undertook to fill the vacancy until a suitable appointment could be made.

Of these five men, Dumouriez was the most able; his character was impatient and precipitate, but he was capable of conceiving and carrying out far-reaching plans. He was fifty-three years old, a wizened, nervous little man with an ugly face and a decided manner. He gesticulated a great



deal in speaking, was always carefully dressed and powdered, and gave the impression of a polished, lettered man of the world. Too hot-headed to make a good statesman, he was too witty to inspire confidence. His colleague De Grave was feeble both of body and mind, and his acceptance of office was a great error of judgment. He liked conciliating every one, and talked very little, not because he was reserved, but because he had no ideas. He walked on his heels, and held up his head so that one could just see the whites of his eyes, eyes that would never keep open after a meal, except with the help of two or three cups of strong coffee. He cared as much as he was capable of doing for the public good, and despised both ambition and money, but he was certainly not the man to supervise and organise a great war, for he had no grip of affairs. Lacoste was a nonentity, a mere office hack from the Admiralty, of an obstinate temper, and lacking both the vision and the activity necessary to a Minister. Clavières, in taking over the Treasury, fulfilled all his ambitions. On coming to Paris in 1780 as a simple merchant from Geneva, he had passed the door of the Ministry of Finance, and had said to himself, "My heart tells me that I shall live in that hotel." His industry was extraordinary: he wrote on any of the financial questions of the day, and had done much secretarial work for Mirabeau, and, being the creator of assignats, he deserved well of those in power! Madame Roland thought the first time she met him that "financial dealings had wizened his soul," and as a further reflection she wrote: "Pre-

occupation with money must spoil the happiest natures, for it is impossible not to attach great value to that with which one occupies oneself every day. A banker may be a clever and agreeable man, but the detachment of Aristides will never be his principal virtue." Clavières was a bad judge of men, because he only studied their intelligences without giving a thought to their characters or their passions; but he was, on the whole, a good administrator. Roland, although a man of nearly sixty, was incredibly active and industrious, austere, obstinate and sincere. He handed over his portfolio as Minister for Justice to Duranthon on 13th April. Duranthon had no qualifications for the post; he was lazy, vain and a great chatterbox; but he was attached to the principles of the Revolution and was a man of quite unimpeachable integrity.

The last Minister for Home Affairs, Cahier de Gerville, had not lived at his official residence in the rue Neuve des Petits Champs, but the Rolands decided to do so, and gave orders that it should be prepared for their reception without delay. The Hôtel de l'Intérieur had been built by Leveau for the Comte de Lionne, and the elegant M. de Calonne had made it one of the marvels of Paris. There were two chapels in this great house, suites of winter and summer apartments and stabling for at least fifty horses. We can imagine the excitement of moving into such a palace; but what must Manon have felt like as she drove through the archway into the paved courtyard of her new home, saw the arcades flanking the great door, the splendid staircase, the great *salon* with its life-

sized picture of Louis xiv. being crowned by Victory, and the endless mirrors in which she was everywhere reflected ? It must have put her in mind of her visit of years before to Versailles, for these splendours represented a life to which she had never aspired. The room in which she decided to sleep was frescoed with gods and goddesses, and the bed stood under a dais of white plumes.

What a problem it was to run a house of this magnitude ! Madame Roland sighed as she slowly ascended the main staircase. So much grandeur meant a great deal of hard work, and work of the sort she was not equipped for. After thinking the situation over in all its bearings, she decided in no way to alter her "Spartan manner of living," or to make herself ridiculous by trying to live in an aristocratic way. (She also made up her mind to spend no energy on externals, but to reserve all her time and spirit for essentials, namely, the inspiring and entertaining of the group that had carried Roland to power. Miscellaneous hospitality or social gatherings she saw might lead her into difficulties. With extreme acuteness she appreciated that it was important to her prestige to keep women out of the house. Smart, agreeable, well-dressed competitors, she realised, were a menace to her authority and influence. Men of course were different ; for experience told her she could dominate them, and anyway they would not dream of criticising her or laughing at the way she did things. Reflection convinced her that Madame Pétion was also a safe guest, for at the Mairie she was in very much the same situation as herself ; and then poor Madame Brissot

was in no sense a rival, for she was entirely given up to domestic cares.] But, with the exception of these two women, she decided to receive no guests save men, and to continue to lead the same austere life which had gained for her husband the name of "Virtuous Roland." She also decided to go on furnishing her apartment in the rue de la Harpe. Since Fortune's wheel had gone up with such a jerk, it was bound to come down again very suddenly one day, and so she stole leisure from official duties and saved money from their official salary to procure arm-chairs and *bergères* covered with yellow Utrecht velvet for her sitting-room, and as she was not fond of mixing colours, she put up yellow-and-white check blinds and yellow taffeta curtains in the windows. She gave a finishing touch to this elegant and cheerful room by buying a forte-piano by Erard. She chose blue velvet chair coverings, blue-and-white check blinds and blue taffeta curtains for her bedroom, but of the decoration of the rest of the house we know nothing. As Madame Roland told Bancal, this apartment was "a place of retreat to be kept in view in the same way that certain philosophers used to keep coffins under their eyes."

[On taking up her official residence in the Hôtel de l'Intérieur, Madame Roland caused it to be publicly known that she neither received nor paid visits. In this way she thought to keep flatterers and place-hunters out of the way and to offer no opening for calumny. The pestering of tiresome Madame Robert may have had something to do with her decision. Twenty-four hours after their elevation to the Ministry this pretentious



woman called on Madame Roland, whom she had not troubled to visit since the Champs de Mars episode, and begged not to be forgotten ; indeed, she went so far as to ask for a diplomatic post for her husband—Constantinople, for example. Two or three other persons asking for preferment followed each other in quick succession. It was quite useless for Madame Roland to say that they had no appointments to bestow, for then she was only asked to use her influence with other Ministers to obtain them. This sort of thing disgusted Madame Roland, and made her feel it necessary to bar her door to all miscellaneous visitors.

Intent on carrying out the Spartan life, Madame Roland set apart a very small room in the Hôtel de l'Intérieur for her own workroom, and there she placed her books and her bureau, and it often happened that when any one wanted a private word with the Minister, he came straight to this workroom and begged her to summon Roland there. Nothing pleased her more, for in this way and without any effort she found herself in the main current of public affairs, and what she missed hearing Roland always told her when they were alone together. Etienne Dumont tells us that she was invariably present at the weekly meetings of Ministers before or after the Council, and although she took no part in the discussion, she sat at a writing-table and heard all that passed. He was prejudiced against her as a new product of civilisation—*la femme politique*—and thought her a little on the defensive, an attitude of mind that in his opinion was caused by ignorance of the world. Her mind and way of working seemed to



him masculine, but even he cannot deny her a quite extraordinary feminine charm.

The Cabinet Council met four times a week, and the Ministers arranged among themselves to dine at each other's houses on these occasions. On Fridays they went to the Hôtel de l'Intérieur, and it surprised Madame Roland considerably to hear how enchanted Roland and Clavières were by their first meetings with the King. For the first three weeks that they held office, Louis XVI. was most friendly to his new Ministers, and impressed them all by his excellent memory and his industry. He seemed to know so much, to have all the treaties made by France with Foreign Powers at his fingers' ends, to wander with an assured step through the mazes of history and to know a surprising amount about geography. Not only did he know all about his courtiers, but he also knew the life-history of all who had in any way distinguished themselves in the last year or two, or who had contributed to bring about the Revolution. He had something to say on every subject, and of course it was easy for him, dull as he was, to dazzle the provincial members of his Council. No one of them save Dumouriez could in any sense be called a man of the world.

The King was always temporising in order to gain time and so as not to betray his real incapacity for government. Neither Roland nor Clavières at first believed it possible for him to intrigue or dissimulate, so frank was his manner with them. Clavières told Madame Roland how greatly impressed he had been when the King put him right on some minor constitutional point, and at the

same time, drawing a well-used copy of the Constitution from his pocket, laughingly said, "You see, sir, I know it better than you do."

Roland told his wife all about his new experiences in the art of government, and she was very much dissatisfied with his account of the way in which the Privy Councils were conducted. To her it seemed an utterly futile way of doing business. It appeared that the work of each Government Department was discussed in rotation, but, more often than not, the King read the English newspapers during the discussion, and generally when anything important came up that required his decision, he referred it to the next Council. He was particularly clever at avoiding issues or even serious discussion: for example, when war was the matter of debate, he talked of travels; when foreign relations were before the Council, he talked of the strange customs of different countries; when it was a question of home affairs, he talked of agriculture, or admired the good work Roland had done for his country. The Council meeting, as Madame Roland told her husband, really was no better than a café, and there was no check on all the chatter, as no secretary was present to record the deliberations, although the King was obliged by the Constitution to appoint such a secretary. Madame Roland was extremely vexed that her husband should condone such frivolous doings, and half feared that his head was being turned. The advantages of office, after all, were more apparent than real, if they carried with them no power of directing the course of events or the destinies of the people.

## CHAPTER XI

### FIRST PERIOD OF OFFICE

“Qui veut atteindre son but doit être sûr de ne marcher que sur ceux qu’il est sûr d’écraser.”—*Les Glânes de la Vie*, COMTESSE DIANE.

**I**N order to sympathise with Madame Roland’s exasperation over the methods of the Privy Council, we must realise that she believed her country to be in danger, and thought it a calamity for Ministers to be in power who could be diverted from their purpose by a few words from Louis XVI.

No one of the Girondin Ministers had any previous experience of office, or indeed of serious responsibility. No one of them, except Dumouriez, could act or speak decisively, for no one of them had the instinct for government; yet the situation with which they were confronted on coming into power was such as would have made the most experienced statesman apprehensive. The country was on the brink of war, and no adequate preparations had been made to deal with the probable invasion. One of the first acts of the new Government was to allow Dumouriez to draw up a dispatch giving Austria a fixed term by which to renounce her policy of coercing France by concerted pressure of the Powers. Remembering the fate of his dilatory and peaceable predecessor Lessart, the Foreign Minister proposed in Council that in the

event of Austria's reply to his ultimatum being unconciliatory, war should be declared at once. This was agreed to by the other members of the Government. Sitting down before a table covered with maps of the Low Countries, he then proceeded to explain to the King and his fellow-Ministers the plan of operation which in his opinion should be adopted.

De Grave, who knew that in spite of Narbonne's optimistic report the nation was not effectively prepared for war, objected to assuming the offensive ; he greatly feared the responsibility for such action. Roland, of course, understood nothing of strategy, and did not share his wife's moral enthusiasm for war as the promoter of patriotism and the healer of internal dissent in nations. Clavières objected to the imposition of new taxes, and, being a cautious man, was anxious to prolong diplomatic negotiations. No Minister, however, really opposed his will to that of Dumouriez, and it was resolved that in certain eventualities war should be declared. The King, who had no secrets from the Queen, communicated all that had passed at this Council meeting to her, and she forthwith passed it on to her friend the Austrian Ambassador in Paris.<sup>1</sup>

On the 18th of April the reply to Dumouriez' ultimatum arrived. Vienna, assured of the support of Berlin, was not inclined for compromise, and maintained the position defined in previous dispatches. This reply made it imperative for the Government to declare war at once.

Two days later the King went down to the

<sup>1</sup> Arneth, p. 259. Fersen, *La Reine à Fersen*, t. ii. p. 220, Mars 30, 1792.

Assembly, where Dumouriez read out the decision of the Privy Council to take offensive action against Austria; then the King in a bored and indifferent voice formally asked the Assembly to declare war against the King of Bohemia and Hungary.<sup>1</sup> The Riding School was packed to overflowing, the excitement was intense. Immediately after the King's Speech the House was adjourned till 5 p.m. When it met again, Pastoret, leader of the Centre, was the first to speak in favour of war. He said: "Liberty must triumph or despotism will destroy us. Never has the people of France been called to such high destinies. We cannot doubt of the success of a war undertaken under such generous auspices. Victory will be faithful to Liberty." The proceedings became more and more disorderly; no one could contain his excitement. Suddenly Merlin de Thionville rushed to the Tribune: "I want to propose that war shall be declared against Kings and peace with nations." This motion was put to the vote and carried amid transports of enthusiasm. At 10 p.m. the draft of the declaration of war was brought in by Gensonné and read to the Assembly. It embodied the ideals of Condorcet and of the Gironde, and in it an undertaking was given "never to engage in any war in the intention of making conquests, never to employ force against the liberty of any people, and only to take up arms in defence of liberty and independence"; the war they were about to embark on was expressly defined to be "not a war of nation against nation, but the just defence

<sup>1</sup> He had succeeded on March 1, but was not yet Emperor of Austria.



of a free people against the unjust aggression of a King.”<sup>1</sup>

So carried away were all parties by excited idealism that the Assembly for once forgot its differences, and only seven members recorded their vote against the declaration of war.

The next morning prices went up on the Bourse.<sup>2</sup> Streams of gold flowed into the Riding School during the ensuing weeks; the table of the Secretaries was piled up with *louis d'or* at every sitting. It literally rained money. One man from Bordeaux deposited 57,000 livres in gold. A sort of furious and impatient generosity seemed to animate all classes. There was no doubt about the popularity of the war; and we must not forget that it was the first war waged by the people of France since the days of Cæsar.

The way the campaign was to be fought had been discussed by Dumouriez and De Grave at conferences with Rochambeau, Lückner and Lafayette.<sup>3</sup> Dumouriez had already unfolded to these generals his plan of operations. He proposed to maintain a defensive cordon on natural frontiers such as the Alps, Pyrenees and Rhine, and to take the offensive everywhere else. His general idea was to seize and occupy the Low Countries before Austria could bring up troops to cover them. Rochambeau was ordered to undertake this operation, an operation of which he

<sup>1</sup> Sorel, vol. ii. p. 434.

<sup>2</sup> *Journal d'une Bourgeoise*, p. 71, “La Bourse qui est le thermomètre de bien des gens est dans une prospérité miraculeuse: tous les effets haussent.”

<sup>3</sup> March 16-20,

intensely disapproved and in which he saw great risk. When he got to his headquarters at Valenciennes he found an order from De Grave instructing him to prepare for a general advance on the 29th of April. Disgusted as he was, the Field-Marshal did his best to put this order into execution, allotting 10,000 of his troops to Lafayette, who had received direct and independent instructions from the War Office to advance with that number of Rochambeau's men on Namur and Liège. This advance Rochambeau was ordered to mask by two columns, one under Lieutenant-General Biron, consisting of 10,000 men marching from Valenciennes to Mons, and the other of 2000 men under General Dillon, marching by Lille and Tournai. Though Biron and Dillon were technically under Rochambeau's orders, both received their instructions independently from the War Office; moreover, these orders were advertised in Paris papers the same day that they were communicated to Rochambeau. One can imagine no easier way of producing chaos in any army. The three columns moved forward on the 29th of April, leaving Rochambeau and the reserves at Valenciennes. A disastrous panic overcame Biron's column near Mons on meeting a few detachments of Austrian cavalry, and believing that they had been betrayed, his men ran away, abandoning all their supplies. The same thing happened outside Lille to Dillon's troops, who, crying out "We are betrayed," murdered their chief and abandoned all their baggage to the enemy. Lafayette, who had been hurrying on Liège by impossibly bad roads, halted at Givet on hearing of the disasters that had overtaken

the two columns which were masking his advance. It was an unlucky opening to the campaign.

Rochambeau, whose authority had been completely overridden by the Minister for War, protested against the way he had been treated and resigned his post. His official master, De Grave, who was nothing but Dumouriez' tool, was unfit to stand any strain; his mind presently gave way, he forgot his own name and began to sign official documents "Maire de Paris." He also resigned, and Dumouriez was hard put to it to find any substitute. New generals are always easier to find than new statesmen. Rochambeau was at once replaced by Lückner. The two old Field-M Marshals spent a week<sup>1</sup> together on the frontier discussing Dumouriez' ill-considered offensive and the way in which its evil effects might be counteracted.

Just before leaving for his new post, Marshal Lückner dined at the Hôtel de l'Intérieur with the Rolands. After listening to his conversation for some time, Madame Roland "felt nearly distracted." She had "never in her life seen anything so mediocre." She describes him "as an old and coarsened soldier without character and without mind, who through courage, swearing and love of wine had become popular with the armies, or at any rate with those poor dupes whom he clapped on the shoulder and said 'thou' to." After enduring him for four hours she exclaimed to Guadet the next day, when he asked her what she thought of the new Commander-in-Chief, "My poor, poor country! You are

<sup>1</sup> May 22-30.

indeed lost if you have to go outside yourself to confide your destinies to such a being." Rather engagingly she adds a rider to this exclamation in her *Mémoires*: "Of course I know nothing about tactics, and Lückner may understand his own business quite well, but I do know that one cannot be a great captain without reason or without intelligence."

As Dumouriez and his colleagues failed to find any successor to De Grave, Madame Roland rose to the occasion and recommended her great friend Joseph Servan as a suitable man for the post. In the old days M. de Servan had been Vice-Governor of the pages of Louis XVI. His sympathies were with the Revolution, and as early as 1780 he had published a small book called *Le Soldat Citoyen*, and had been discharged from his employment at Versailles on account of his views. He had seen active service, and was decorated with the Cross of St. Louis. Madame Roland had got to know him very well in Lyons in 1790, when he was commanding some troops of the line there. Of course people, when they heard he had been selected as War Minister, did not hesitate to say it was because he was Madame Roland's lover; but there is not the faintest indication that they were ever anything but friends who esteemed each other reasonably. The same thing was said when her great friend M. Bosc d'Antic was made head of the Post Office in which he had served so long, and indeed when any of her friends were appointed to posts during the time her husband was in office. On the day after De Grave's resignation<sup>1</sup> Madame Roland wrote

<sup>1</sup> May 9.

to Servan, evidently in answer to some note of his :

“ Yes, sir, *I* have wished it, I have willed it ; I hold to this opinion, and you will justify it. . . . You are in the breach, you have nothing to do but win ; the first earnest of victory is the hope of gaining it by the justice of one’s cause and the greatness of one’s courage. . . . You must be firm and frank. Advance boldly on the goal and make the Constitution work. . . . We must save ‘ *la chose publique* ’ or perish with it.”

The next day she wrote again to Colonel Servan saying that if in a fortnight’s time he had not “ shown character ” and “ drafted important measures,” he would have proved “ he was worth no more than the rest.” “ Remember,” she says, “ your drastic proposals for controlling officers and giving confidence to the men ; remember the letter the King has got to write to Lückner, it is important. Public opinion must be enlightened about Rochambeau and the coalition which supports him. Remember your opinions as to the necessity of concentrating a large force instead of little armies on the frontier of Brabant. Remember, my friend, that justice is goodness in office and that firmness is a most difficult quality to preserve.”<sup>1</sup>

Servan certainly made a better War Minister than De Grave, but Madame Roland’s selection of friends did not always do her credit. For example, a few months earlier she had made acquaintance with one Pache, a clerk in the Admiralty. As she was always on the look out for exceptional virtue, she was attracted to M. Pache by his apparent modesty and by the fact that he had declined a pension to which he was entitled. She forthwith determined to cultivate his ac-

<sup>1</sup> *Lettres*, vol. ii. p. 424.



quaintance. He behaved as though Madame Roland were an oracle; every word that fell from her mouth was treasured up. He was delightfully and obviously impressed, and fired by her uncalculating patriotism and by Roland's ability and public spirit. (When Roland became Minister, neither he nor his wife could think of any more suitable person to employ as private secretary than humble M. Pache. M. Pache, who appeared to be overcome at this mark of confidence, only consented to serve M. Roland on condition he received no pay or reward of any kind—for independence was the one good this upright man cherished. And so from seven in the morning till three in the afternoon he worked, or rather slaved, at the Minister's office, never accepting any hospitality from his master, and nibbling away at luncheon-time at the crust of bread he always brought with him in his pocket.

When Servan became War Minister, the Rolands felt they could do their friend no better turn than to lend him this treasure as private secretary. Again Pache agreed to oblige them, but on the same condition as before; and so for the moment we may leave him working industriously and humbly for Colonel Servan, though later we shall have to resume his acquaintance in the less menial offices of Minister for War and Mayor of Paris. Both at the Home Office and the War Office he became cognisant of all sorts of official and departmental secrets; he had the Ministry, as it were, in the hollow of his hands; and no better person could have been employed by "patriots" or Maratists to spy out the weaknesses and the re-

actionary tendencies of a Girondin administration. Unknown to themselves, the Rolands were cherishing a viper in their bosoms. (Little did they guess that the demand for the heads of the Gironde would be made less than a year later by Pache, the patriot Mayor of the city!)

All the Girondin Ministers settled down in their official residences as if they were there for life. Etienne Dumont, who dined with them all in turns, says that Madame Roland alone seemed to preserve any memory of her real standing, for one night she pointed out to him the magnificent gilding and decoration of their official residence, and said it was to her "but the luxury of an inn."

On the whole, Girondin society was extremely pleasant, the talk was often gay, cultivated and witty. A dinner-party might be composed of so many agreeable elements. Louvet and Dumouriez, for example, were delightful socially, Brissot was an excellent talker, and Roederer a man of considerable wit. Condorcet did not talk much, and was nicknamed "*le mouton enragé*," but he often stimulated talk in others by his pronouncements. The only official house at which it was not quite so pleasant to dine was that of Pétion, the Mayor, for persons of "a quite shocking grossness" were often present. The licentious Chabot, for example, used to don a red cap and amuse the company with buffooneries directed against the King. The only disadvantage, as Madame Roland found, about belonging to a popular party was having to associate with persons who were "coarse and dirty." This horror of the dregs of the people grew upon Madame Roland and consequently

upon the men she influenced, and the days were not far distant when she was to think of the popular deputations of unwashed persons to the Assembly in the terms her friend Buzot used to describe them, "this troop of frenzied men, of imbeciles, which to-day is called the people," "the strange beast with several heads," "these verminous insects rising from the slime," and so on. Her fastidious friend seems to have destroyed or alienated that tender feeling for the poor and the downtrodden to which her ministrations at Boitteux had given birth. We must, however, remember that these feelings were evoked by the sufferings of normal men and women and not by the faked poverty, filth and coarseness affected by men like Chabot, Marat and their followers. People of this kind, no matter how powerful they were, never received invitations to the Home Office parties, for Madame Roland, unlike Madame Pétion, was not obliged by her husband's official position to extend her hospitality over so wide a field.

By far the most important and successful — of the official dinners were those given by Madame Roland on Mondays and Fridays. The form of the invitations, which were sent out by "little brother Lanthénas," was courteous but cordial; for example, to M. Dulaure, editor of the *Thermomètre du Jour*, the secretary wrote: "Madame Roland has gathered a few patriots to dine with her husband to-morrow, Monday. She invites M. Dulaure to come too, and so give her husband the pleasure of knowing the good citizen of whom M. Lanthénas has so often spoken." Madame Roland made a most charming hostess and dis-

played great animation and wit, and her parties were much talked of. They took place, as we have said, on Mondays and Fridays—on Mondays Roland's colleagues and an occasional deputy were entertained, on Fridays deputies, permanent officials, journalists, ambassadors and officers were made welcome. Fifteen covers were usually laid, and only on one occasion were there twenty diners. The dinners began at five, and by nine o'clock the rooms were empty. The rest of the weekly meals were eaten *tête-à-tête* by Roland and his wife. Madame Clavières, the only other woman in official life who tried to imitate Madame Roland's system of entertaining, was a frivolous, foolish little person, and her womanless parties were not a success. In view of the enormous importance attached by Madame Roland's enemies and accusers later on to these dinners,—these "sumptuous feasts of Circe,"—which it was alleged had been hotbeds of intrigue, it is not uninteresting to note what Madame Grandchamp says they were intended to bring about. (Sophie was the confidante of all Manon's aspirations, and she tells us that from the moment Roland had been made Minister of the Interior, Lanthénas and Manon had put their heads together to see whether this offered them any new chance of influencing and guiding the deliberations of those popular clubs and societies in which they both took so much interest. Lanthénas inspired Madame Roland with the idea of establishing as a department of Home Office administration a central bureau for corresponding with these societies and clubs. It was proposed that this



bureau should undertake to distribute literature and to provide paid speakers to address branch meetings from time to time and indoctrinate them with the right political beliefs. Once this scheme was planned, Madame Roland could not rest till she had persuaded the Assembly through her husband to accept it, and provide the necessary funds for its execution. Roland dismissed the matter angrily when she tried to talk it over with him, and told her he needed no bureau to support him, that his own integrity and zeal must see him through, and that he did not wish to be suspected of intrigue. For the time being, Madame Roland had to drop this scheme, though she resumed it with success during her husband's second period of office. Instead of it, she tried by personal influence to indoctrinate every one who dined at her house with her own views as to how a nation could be educated on lines of political and moral freedom. After a good deal of trouble she persuaded Roland to finance *La Sentinelle*, a journal-placard which was to appear twice a week as a pink or grey poster printed in large type in three columns. Her friend Louvet was made editor of this newspaper, or rather "instruction" or "proclamation," the real object of which was to enlighten the people on home and foreign affairs, and to elevate them morally. It was designed as an antidote to the dreadful little papers in circulation, such as the *Bouche de Fer*, the *Ami du Peuple*, the *Père Duchesne*, and was not so much the work of an individual as the arm of a party, the mouthpiece of its genius and ideals. Louvet felt the editorship to be a serious business, "a



painful and important task, for it meant acting as the watchman for all." The first number of the *Sentinelle* containing a philippic against Lafayette appeared, to Madame Roland's pride and joy, on the 23rd of May. This Government organ was soundly backed by Brissot's paper *le Patriote Français*, which announced that by means of this poster every one would be instructed in what to fear, and hope for the salvation of France. What impressed Madame Roland more than anything else, as she observed the people with whom she came in contact, was their mediocrity. Almost every one, from departmental clerk to Minister, was a nonentity. It gave her courage and belief in herself to realise this, for, as she confesses, she had always thought that people more decided than herself had more character.] Of the men about her she said, "I am not astonished that they like me, they feel I am worth something, and yet in good faith I have always paid honour to the self-respect of others." The more Madame Roland saw of one of her ministerial colleagues, Dumouriez—and she saw a great deal of him—the less she liked him. She thought it very bad taste that he should have his mistress, Madame de Beauvert, doing the honours of his table. Not only was it a scandal in itself, but since Madame de Beauvert was a sister of Rivarol, and had a great number of aristocratic friends, Dumouriez' house naturally became "suspect" to patriots. Then Dumouriez had appointed rather an equivocal person, Bonne-carrère, as chief of the department of Foreign Affairs, and there had been some money transactions arranged by him for Madame de Beauvert

which had given rise to a good deal of talk. Roland, as the oldest member of the Cabinet, was asked to remonstrate with Dumouriez over his levity of conduct and general carelessness of appearance, and this in the presence of the rest of the Cabinet and two or three deputies. The interview took place after dinner in Madame Roland's study. Dumouriez, who was not a young man, strongly resented this interference with his private affairs, and from that moment ceased to associate with any deputies, became extremely distant with his colleagues, and went very rarely to the Hôtel de l'Intérieur. Madame Roland, on thinking the matter over, remarked to her husband a few days later that if they did not want to be turned out by Dumouriez, they had better turn him out. It was rather unfortunate for the Girondin party that Dumouriez should have earned the moral disapproval of his colleague's wife, for the Cabinet was weak enough when united, but when disunited it was quite useless. The King, meanwhile, on the strength of the reverses on the frontier and the signs of dissension in the Cabinet, was becoming bolder in his attitude—that is to say, more and more procrastinating in business. He always had reasons for postponing his decisions till the next Cabinet meeting, nothing was put through, and Roland, naturally impatient of this calculated system of obstruction, and stimulated by his wife, proposed to write a letter to the King "*le mettant en démente de gouverner sans ambages avec la majorité.*" This letter was drafted on the 19th of May, and he showed it to his colleagues. Clavières was against sending it, so of course was Duranthon.

Meanwhile, the temper of the Assembly was irritated by news from the frontiers and by disturbances in the provinces caused by the priests, who refused to accept the Constitutional Church. Suspicions of royal treason became universal amongst members, and the Brissotins, knowing that the invasion of France was every day becoming more imminent, determined on pushing matters to a clear and speedy issue. On the 20th of May the so-called "Austrian Committee" was denounced; on the 21st Guadet, Gensonné and Brissot demanded the impeachment of Montmorin, and an inquiry into the conduct of Bertrand de Molleville and Dupont Dutertre, ex-Ministers and secret advisers to the King. On the 27th it was decreed that non-juring priests should be deported from the kingdom—a measure which it was popularly supposed would rid the country of about 50,000 reactionaries. On the 29th, after an animated discussion, it was settled that the King's Guard be disbanded, and its commandant, the Duc de Brissac, sent to join Lessart at Orleans.<sup>1</sup> Both these measures required the King's sanction before they could be carried into execution. He sanctioned one of them without delay, and that was the disbanding of his own Guard, but he would not assent to the banishment of the non-jurors.

Madame Roland again and again in her *Mémoires* speaks of the intense impatience and irritation she felt at the dilatoriness and inactivity of Ministers. Her irritation found a natural vent in wire-pulling, and we shall see that all the precipitators of the coming crisis were men

<sup>1</sup> Mortimer Ternaux, *Hist. de la Terreur*, vol. i. p. 113.

strongly under her influence. The men, for example, who denounced the Austrian Committee dined continually at her house; Servan, who had exposed the "criminal negligence" of his predecessors in office, and proposed the disbandment of the King's Guard, was constantly receiving notes<sup>1</sup> from her on the situation, and continually consulted her as to his work. Then the Minister of the Interior, who initiated the decree for the deportation of priests, was her own husband.

Deportation was a form of penalty that she particularly approved of, and she would have liked to see the King's Guard sent to Cayenne, for she did not for one moment think it had changed its character in changing its clothes. Disbanded, the men seemed to her as easily able to co-operate with the invading enemy as if they were still ranged in battalions. Deportation seemed to her the one safe solution, both for the Guard and the nonconformist priests who were troubling the country districts. Neither she nor the people at that time had begun to think how much safer was the grave.

Her energy and resource were unlimited, and Servan was her willing tool, so it is no surprise to find that one of her favourite projects should materialise in one of Servan's first public speeches. In it he adumbrated a suggestion, which he later on proposed<sup>2</sup> as an emergency measure, that the coming Feast of Federation<sup>3</sup> should be seized as

<sup>1</sup> *Lettres*, vol. ii. pp. 423, 424. "Ne m'espargnez point pour les détails qui pourrez vous être à charge." "Disposez de moi pour tout ce que vous jugerez bon." "Je jouis ici une note préparée depuis plusieurs jours," etc.

<sup>2</sup> June 3.

<sup>3</sup> July 14.



an occasion for establishing a camp of 20,000 territorial or Federal troops outside the walls of Paris to keep order in the capital. The proposal was audaciously unconstitutional, since neither King nor colleagues had been consulted in the matter, but it was unquestionably inspired by Madame Roland. She and Colonel Servan in discussing military problems together had become convinced there was no time to be lost in concentrating every available regular soldier upon the frontier. They also agreed that since the air of Paris was murky with treason, and they were threatened at any moment either with a Royalist *coup d'état* or a sectional *coup d'état*, it was necessary not only to destroy the King's Guard but to have a trustworthy armed force to suppress rioting. The forty-eight sections or wards of Paris had several times during the winter and spring of 1791-2 petitioned that the National Guard (which consisted of sixty battalions corresponding to the sixty *arrondissements* into which Paris had been divided at the time the States-General was summoned) should be transformed into forty-eight battalions or "armed sections," a proposal in which Servan and Madame Roland scented serious danger. This transformation did not take place till after the 10th of August. A few weeks later it became evident to all that for the Commune of Paris to have an armed force at its disposal might mean the end of good government.

In the Assembly Colonel Servan's proposal for a Federal Guard was welcomed with acclamation, and a motion embodying it was referred to the Military Committee to be reported on.



On 6th June the Assembly decreed that 20,000 *Fédérés* should be assembled in Paris on 14th July, and Madame Roland sat in her ministerial box and enjoyed her triumph. She was responsible for a good deal, and it is surely no overstatement of fact to say that she had forced the issue between the progressive and conservative elements in the Assembly, and had devised the policy which was to wreck the Council as it then existed. At the meeting of the Executive next day the War Minister and the Foreign Minister almost came to blows. Dumouriez asked Servan by what right he had put the measure for a Federal Guard forward in the Assembly without the consent of his colleagues, and he answered, "As an individual." "In that case," said Dumouriez, "you should not have proposed it in your capacity as Minister for War." However, since the Assembly had approved the measure, the Cabinet was obliged to accept what to three of its members was a most unwise and undesirable decree. It rested with the King to decide if it should become law. Three of the Ministers threatened to resign if he appended his veto, but, assured of the sympathy of the remaining three, Dumouriez, Lacoste and Duranthon, the King boldly refused his sanction to the formation of the Federal camp in the capital. He also vetoed the Bill for the deportation of priests, and naturally enough tried to turn the Cabinet split to what personal advantage he could. Pressed once more at a Council meeting on the 10th of June by the Ministers of War and of the Interior for his sanction to the decrees affecting their departments, he compromised and requested that each of his Min-

isters should give him his signed, considered and individual opinion on the questions at issue before the next Council ; he then lightly passed on to talk of less contentious matters.

This command of the King's gave Roland the opportunity he had longed for. Three weeks earlier he had tried to get his round robin, urging the King to behave straightforwardly, signed by his colleagues, and had failed in doing so. Now at last he could write to the King on his own responsibility. On reaching home after the Council he added a few telling words to his wife's original draft, and then read the manuscript aloud to the obsequious Pache, who admired the production, but thought it a very bold step to send it. Madame Roland, who adored boldness, said, "Of course it is bold, but it is just and it is necessary, and what else matters ?" She then went on to assure her husband that he must resign office immediately if measures which in his opinion were essential to the country's good were vetoed by the King. Simple resignation, however, was not to her mind consonant with true courage. It was necessary "to merit dismissal by an exposure of the real situation."

➤ In recounting the genesis of this famous letter to the King Madame Roland explains what share of her husband's work she was in the habit of taking over. Never did she interfere in any question of administration, but whenever a circular, a minute, a public document, had to be drawn up, she took up her pen. "I wrote with him as I eat with him," she says ; and again : "He described crafts, I described them," "he prepared orations for academies, so

did I," and it was not likely that the habit of their whole married life could be broken off by a few weeks of official life. She rather naïvely says that, though Roland would not have made a less good Minister without her help, she cannot but realise that "with her he produced more of a sensation." And what indeed would virtuous Roland's place in history be if he had not married Manon ?

The letter described France as "seething with discontent" stimulated for the most part in country districts by non-juring priests. It was important to Ministers to know whether the King meant to stand by the Constitution or secretly support those who were scheming to upset it. As a matter of fact, Louis was within his rights in vetoing the decree for the deportation of priests, and, as he perfectly well realised, the non-jurors were the chief hope of Royalism throughout France. To his mind it was worth running great risks to preserve them. Roland's letter went on to state that the deportation of non-jurors was a measure essential to public tranquillity, and pointed out that if the law were not enacted, the departments would be driven to take the law into their own hands. The last few paragraphs of a very long letter which reads like a lecture ran as follows :

"The efforts of our enemies, the disturbances which have already taken place in the capital, the anxiety excited by the behaviour of your Guards—which indeed is still actively present owing to the marks of approval which Your Majesty was led to confer on them by a proclamation truly impolitic in the circumstances—the state of Paris, its proximity to the frontiers, have made the want

of a camp felt in this neighbourhood : this measure, the wisdom and urgency of which has impressed all sensible people, only awaits Your Majesty's approval. Why should delays in conferring this approval be allowed to give it an appearance of being done with regret, whereas promptness in sanctioning the measure will earn gratitude for Your Majesty ?

“Already the efforts against this measure made by the General Staff of the National Guard of Paris have led to the suspicion that it is acting on promptings from on high ; already the vapourings of certain exaggerated demagogues rouse suspicion of their relations with those interested in upsetting the Constitution ; already public opinion compromises Your Majesty's intentions : but a little more delay and the disappointed people will think to see in their King the friend and accomplice of conspirators.

“Just Heaven ! hast Thou indeed struck with blindness the powerful ones of the earth, and will they never be offered any advice but that which will lead them to ruin ?

“I know that the austere language of truth is rarely well received near a throne ; I know also that it is because it is so rarely able to make itself heard that revolutions become necessary ; above all, I know that it is my duty to speak truth to Your Majesty, not only as a citizen subject to the laws, but as a Minister honoured with Your Majesty's confidence, or at any rate charged with offices which presuppose that confidence ; and I know nothing which could keep me from discharging a duty of which I have become conscious.

“It is in the same spirit that I would reiterate my representation to Your Majesty on the obligation and utility of carrying out the law which ordains that there should be a secretary to the Council. The very fact of the existence of this law appears compelling ; it seems fitting that its execution should follow without delay ; it is most important to use every possible means of preserving the necessary soberness, wisdom and maturity in the delibera-



tions of the Council, and also to give responsible Ministers a means, if necessary, of verifying their opinions. If the Council had had a secretary I should not now be writing this letter to Your Majesty.

“ Life is nothing to a man who prizes his duty above all else ; but, next to the happiness of having fulfilled one’s duty, the only good of which he is still aware is that of realising that he has done his duty faithfully. This in itself is a duty incumbent on a public man.

“ (Signed) ROLAND.

“ PARIS, 10th June 1792.

“ Year IV. of Liberty.”

When the King read this letter he was extremely angry, and made up his mind then and there to get rid of the Ministers who were making life intolerable. He was more than ever determined not to give way about the Federal Camp or the priests, therefore he felt he must dismiss the Ministers who were responsible for these two measures. Their ally, the Finance Minister, he considered should also be driven from office, and he relied upon Dumouriez to reform the Government.

On the evening of the following day Servan called on Madame Roland with a radiant look. “ Congratulate me,” he said, “ I have been dismissed ! ”

“ I am much annoyed that this honour should have come to you first,” said Madame Roland, “ but I hope it will not be long before it is extended to my husband.”

Servan then told her how he had gone that day to talk over the camp with the King, who seemed in a very bad temper ; how he had turned his royal back on him and ordered Dumouriez to relieve the Minister for War of his portfolio.



On hearing of this dismissal Madame Roland thought it well to send immediately for other members of the Council to discuss the situation. Clavières and Duranthon came in at once in response to her summons, and settled to return at eight the next morning, by which time Roland was to have prepared a letter for them all to sign. He communicated to them the substance of the letter he had himself sent to the King, and for which he was hourly expecting dismissal. Early the next morning the Ministers reappeared, but a night's sleep had made them cautious, and they decided to send no letter to the King, but to try to have an audience with him; after which weighty decision they went off to interview Lacoste at the Hôtel de la Marine to find out what he thought about the crisis. Lacoste was very hesitating in manner, and just as they were beginning to talk things over a message arrived summoning Duranthon to go to the King immediately. Roland and Clavières then decided to go to his official residence and wait for him. Hardly had they arrived at the Hôtel de Justice when Duranthon appeared with a long face, and very slowly drew out of each pocket a letter of dismissal for each Minister. "Well, you are keeping us waiting for our freedom," said Roland, laughing, and then taking the letter addressed to him, he went home.

Madame Roland suggested that to make everything quite clear he should send the Assembly a copy of his letter to the King. This idea pleased them both immensely; it was doing what they both so much approved of—that is to say, taking



MADAME ROLAND COMPOSING HER LETTER TO THE KING

*After the picture by Lacauchie*



the country into their confidence. A copy of the now famous missive was forthwith dispatched and was read that day in the Riding School. "Usefulness and glory followed my husband in his retirement. I was not proud of his entry into the Ministry; I was at his departure," says Madame Roland on looking back at this episode from her prison cell.

The letter was enthusiastically received by the Assembly; it was sent to be printed and at once distributed throughout the eighty-three departments of France. A vote of confidence was also passed in the Ministers who had been dismissed. They were introduced to the Riding School and acclaimed there as martyrs. Dumouriez, who had that day taken over the portfolio for War, then entered the House in his new rôle to read a hastily prepared report on the Army. He was fortunate enough to be able to announce that Lafayette had met with a small success, but even this did not gain him the ear of the House: it refused for some time to listen to what he had to say, though with perseverance he managed to get a more or less interrupted hearing.

Roland's letter appeared in the *Moniteur*: it was said on all sides that it would win for him the admiration and esteem of the whole country. Some enthusiasts went so far as to say that it assured his immortality.

## CHAPTER XII

### RUMOURS OF WAR

“C'est du choc des caractères et non de la lutte des idées que naissent les antipathies.”—*Ursule Mirouet*, BALZAC.

THE King was on the whole pleased with his exercise of authority, for after all it was some consolation to know that he had enough power left to make and unmake men. He sent for Dumouriez and asked him to replace the dismissed Ministers by other men, but at the interview was rather distressed to learn that though he had power enough to make men come and go, he had no power to make measures come or go. Before agreeing to form a new Government, Dumouriez actually asked him to sanction the very measures he had just vetoed, and also insisted, just as Roland had done, that he should appoint a secretary to the Privy Council.<sup>1</sup> Though feeling that it was too monstrous for a King to be treated like this, after many objections and much argument he agreed to the conditions laid down, and on this understanding Dumouriez took over the portfolio for War and proceeded to recommend suitable candidates for the vacant offices.<sup>2</sup> The Cabinet he formed held office but

<sup>1</sup> *Vie de Dumouriez*, vol. ii. pp. 281-2.

<sup>2</sup> Home Office—Mourges; Treasury—Beaulieu; Foreign Office—Naillac.



for four days, since the King at the first Council meeting declared he had no real intention of sanctioning the vetoed measures, and proceeded to read aloud the letter in which he proposed to announce this decision to the Assembly. On finding that the King had broken faith with him, Dumouriez resigned at once, and so did all his colleagues. Lacoste and Duranthon were, however, persuaded by Louis to rescind their resignations, and remain at their posts. When the King had got rid of the last of his truculent and insubordinate advisers, his only idea was to maintain his position till the arrival of the Austro-Prussian army which was to restore to him his full authority. It was necessary for him, however, to appoint some simulacrum of an executive, in order to prevent having a new and possibly more advanced Council foisted upon him by the Brissotin party in the House. It seemed as though a Figaro was needed for this constitutional juggling, and who should Louis pitch upon but Figaro himself ? <sup>1</sup> On the 17th of June 1792 Paris was dumb-founded to hear that Beaumarchais, aged sixty, had been appointed Minister of the Interior. Desmoulins announced it as an accomplished fact ; Gorsas in the *Courrier* for the 18th of June said :

“ The monarch wishes to amuse us before dealing us his final blow. They say that the latest phantom Ministry he is about to endow us with, is worthy of the master and his valets. . . . They say the department of Foreign Affairs is to be handed to M. Chambonas, the War Office to a Monsieur Lajard, and to whom has the Home Office been promised ? . . . To Figaro, the Barber of Seville.”

<sup>1</sup> Aulard, *Études et Leçons*, vol. vi. p. 186.

Such a burst of laughter greeted this announcement that the portfolio fell from Beaumarchais' outstretched hands; even the King saw it was impossible.

On the 19th of June the people of Paris were notified of the fact that Louis had vetoed the decrees for the Federal Guard and the deportation of priests. It occurred to many a man in the street to question the King's good faith, and to wonder whether he was at all serious about the defence of the country or the establishment of the Constitution. A dull, inarticulate distrust of the King showed itself in the assembling of a large crowd round the Palace that evening; men said that they wanted Louis to say what he was working for, to define his position, openly. The burlesque invasion of the Tuileries on the following day gave more people a chance of showing their feeling about the situation. For some weeks sectional organisers in Paris had been preparing to keep this anniversary of the Oath of the Tennis Court by going in procession to plant a Tree of Liberty on the Terrace of the Feuillants, and by presenting a petition to the King "analogous to the circumstances." It was well known that this demonstration was to take place.<sup>1</sup> The organisers, who were probably financed by Jacobin and Cordeliers Societies, had applied to the Commune for permission to carry arms, which at that time it was illegal to do. Pétion, the Mayor, could not authorise this on his own responsibility, and so he got out of the

<sup>1</sup> *Journal d'une Bourgeoise*, p. 131; Mortimer Ternaux, *Hist. de la Terreur*, vol. 1. p. 129.

difficulty by ordering that a detachment of the National Guard should escort the petitioners. Under the circumstances it was quite the most sensible decision he could make, and all in the interest of law and order, though it was afterwards taken by the Feuillants to prove that the municipality had encouraged the invasion of the Tuileries. On the morning of the 20th of June two processions set out for the Terrace of the Feuillants; one from the Place de la Bastille and the other from the Salpêtrière. Tablets inscribed with the Rights of Man were at their head, placed amidst an escort of cannon. Small banners bearing inscriptions such as "*La Nation, La Loi*," "*Quand la patrie est en danger, tous les sansculottes sont levés*," waved above the motley throng of men, women, children and National Guards. Everybody seemed in a gay mood as they marched towards the Riding School and as they planted their Tree of Liberty on the Feuillant Terrace. At 1.30 the petitioners began filing into the Assembly, and for three hours they continued to pass along the Piste in a seemingly endless procession. Some of their spokesmen declared that they stood by the Constitution and demanded that the King should have no will but that of the law, for it was wrong that one man's whim should control the will of twenty-five million persons. One orator was particularly eloquent—a real Cicero,<sup>1</sup> according to his auditors. He said: "If out of respect for him we keep the King in his position, it is on condition that he fills it constitutionally; if he does not do this, he is

<sup>1</sup> *Journal d'une Bourgeoise*, p. 137.

nothing to the French people . . .” And later, “If the inaction of our armies is to be attributed to the executive power, let that power be destroyed.” The President of the Assembly made some vague answer to these speeches, and, just as the last group of petitioners withdrew, was able to announce that brave General Lückner had taken Courtrai with more than 1000 prisoners. Later in the afternoon the petitioners invaded the Tuileries. Determined on interviewing the King, they forced the garden entrance and the great portal—there was no bodyguard now—and went on till at last they came to an inner door which, to their surprise, Louis XVI. himself opened to his unmannerly visitors, crying, “*Vive la Nation!*” and waving his hat. With an instinct for the right thing which with him was particularly rare, he sat himself in the high embrasure of a window giving on to the great court of the Palace, ordering six National Guards to stand round him. Presently the Tables of the Rights of Man were brought and placed before him as he sat on his improvised throne, and well-primed citizens cried, “Sanction the decrees!” “Recall the patriot Ministry!” “Hunt the priests out!” “Choose — between Coblentz and Paris!” Two cockades were then presented to him, a white and a tri-colour; he chose the latter, and, seeing a red cap in the hand of one of the men near him, Louis, who had been shaking many dirty hands and waving his hat continuously, thought to satisfy all hearts and answer all questions by asking for it and placing it on his powdered head. The petitioners filed on and on past him, and the King sat quietly



there, making no promises, but smiling and wearing the red cap and the tricolour. This impromptu *levée* was no idyll—people are never idyllic in crowds—but it was not brutal or cruel; it was worse in a way, for it was a mere burlesque. During the afternoon various deputies, such as Vergniaud and Isnard, came and stood in a protective manner round the King, and Pétion the Mayor, who should have kept the people out of the Palace, was carried in shoulder high about 6 p.m. It was time to put an end to the reception, and he asked the people to go away quietly, which they did, thoroughly satisfied that they had warned the King of their own feeling for the Constitution, and in a sense had recaptured him for themselves.

Meanwhile, the King and Queen, like storm-tossed mariners, kept a ceaseless look out upon the troubled seas of opinion and principle which surrounded them, and fixed their hope on those far hills across the Rhine from whence their help was finally to come. What the delay meant for them they guessed well enough, as now they took in a reef here or let out sail there in their effort to keep afloat till rescuers came.

If we look for a moment behind the veil that shrouded the King and Queen at this time from the suspicious eyes of the people of Paris, we shall see what real foundation there was for the distrust in him so universally manifested; what reason there had been for the impeachment of the Austrian Committee; what cause Madame Roland had for urging her party to force the King's hand, to push him out into the open and then disarm him by a series of measures directed against his guard, the



Church in which he believed and his Royalist friends in Paris; what reason the club organisers had for making the people invade the Tuileries; and, finally, we shall also see Louis' reason for behaving in the equivocal way he did.

First we must assist at a conference held at Sans Souci on the 12th of May,<sup>1</sup> over which the King of Prussia presided, and at which the Commander-in-Chief of the Austrian Army, Prince Hohenlohe Kirchberg, represented his Emperor. At Bouillé's instigation it was there and then suggested that a march on Paris by way of Champagne should be resolved on by the Allies. This was agreed, and Bouillé was requested to draw up a plan of operations. Brunswick, who was to command the invading force, had a horror of *émigrés*, refused to have them in his army, and assigned them a subordinate rôle in Alsace, as far away as he could from the main theatre of operations. The Allies expected to be able to put 174,000 men<sup>2</sup> into the field, of which 110,000 were to be used for the subjugation of Paris. Prussia, it was thought, could be ready by June, but it was impossible for Austria to move till the end of July. The advice of Kaunitz, "not to leave the enemy time to prepare for war, and to deal a decisive blow at once," was neglected. The blow, when it did come, was too late to serve its purpose. The history of France and perhaps of all Europe would have been changed had the Allies fought in May instead of August.

<sup>1</sup> Sorel, *L'Europe et la Révolution Française*, vol. ii. p. 471.

<sup>2</sup> 42,000 Prussians; 106,000 Austrians; 20,000 *émigrés*; 6000 Hessians.

The King and Queen were in constant communication with their would-be rescuers, and duly received a report of the Sans Souci Conference. After duly considering it they sent Mallet du Pan to Germany with their instructions. The fate they feared most was being carried away from Paris to the South by *Fédérés*.<sup>1</sup> There was an idea, they heard, that in the event of invasion, the seat of Government might be transferred to Lyons, Avignon or Marseilles. With this horrid possibility staring them in the face, the King and Queen conceived the notion that the people of France should be reconciled to the forthcoming invasion by some well-worded manifesto. The Allies must make it clear that they were warring on Jacobinism and not on the French nation, that their only object in marching on France was to restore a legitimate monarchy. It did not strike the King and Queen that it might be difficult for a nation at large to believe that invasion could be undertaken for such disinterested motives, or that most of their subjects would see in such a project the intention to restore absolutism and the *status quo ante* revolution.

Knowing as we do know of the negotiations between the King and his saviours, we can see how important it seemed to the Progressives, who suspected what we know, to give him no time and no chance of carrying out any plan to restore absolute monarchy in France. They felt obliged to deal him thrust after thrust, to get rid of his guard and his priests, and to try, by the concentration of provincial troops in the capital, to prevent

<sup>1</sup> Fersen to King of Sweden, June 13.

anything in the nature of a Royalist *coup d'état* by Lafayette and his soldiers.

Fortified by Lückner's dismal report <sup>1</sup> on the army, which was in flat contradiction to Narbonne's report of two months earlier, and cheered by his knowledge that his friends, the Allies, were at last about to move, Louis XVI. felt himself in a position to take a high line over the invasion of his palace by the sovereign people. He therefore issued a proclamation protesting against the indignity done to him, a proclamation which was the last trumpet call to fast-fading Royalism in France. It provoked many addresses of sympathy from all quarters, many condolences, many offers of help. Lafayette, whom we know the Queen thoroughly distrusted, rushed back from the frontier <sup>2</sup> bearing with him a letter from Lückner, assuring the King in the name "of an indignant Army" of his sympathy and loyalty. It was a pity for Louis that he did not bring that army back with him.

At the bar of the Assembly Lafayette demanded that the instigators of the invasion of the Tuileries on the 20th of June should be severely punished. Men immediately said that Lückner and Lafayette were plotting to restore the King by force of arms, but if this was the case, the Queen spoilt any chances of success by refusing to have anything to do with a *coup d'état* in which distrusted Lafayette was concerned. There was to have been a review of the National Guard on the 29th of

<sup>1</sup> " Dans l'état effroyable où se trouve l'armée, je ne puis répondre que les Autrichiens ne soient à Paris avant six semaines."—Mortimer Ternaux, t. xi. p. 113.

<sup>2</sup> June 28.

June, and Lafayette had intended to harangue his old soldiers and work them up against the Jacobins ; but the King, afraid of any premature outburst, warned Pétion of this, and the review was countermanded. Snubbed and discouraged, Lafayette went back to his post as suddenly as he came.<sup>1</sup> Robespierre's speech at the Jacobin Club, in which he said that the Assembly ought to "accuse" Lafayette, was very well received, and resulted in this General being burnt in effigy at the Palais Royale.

On the 2nd of July the King was greatly encouraged by hearing that the Army of the North under Lückner was retreating on Lille and Valenciennes, and that 80,000 Prussians were advancing by Coblenz under the most celebrated General in Europe, the Duke of Brunswick. The following day, Vergniaud, in the Assembly, "unveiled and denounced the treason of Louis XVI." "Our Northern army has suddenly fallen back ; the theatre of war has been transferred from Belgium to our own territory. A formidable Prussian army threatens the Rhine. Gentlemen, what are you going to do for '*La Chose Publique*' ?" Reminding them of the two vetoed measures designed to put an end to religious dissension, and to promote the interests of good government, Vergniaud begged them to listen calmly to what he had to say :

"It is in the name of the King that French Princes have tried to raise Europe ; it is to avenge the dignity of the King that the Treaty of Pillnitz was concluded ; it is to come to the rescue of the King that Prussia marches even *now* upon our frontiers ! And is it not laid down in the

<sup>1</sup> June 30.



Constitution that if the King make no formal opposition to an army directed against the French nation, he shall be judged as having abdicated? Supposing in such circumstances a King left the command to an intriguing General—a suspect; supposing another as yet uncorrupted General asked for reinforcements; does not the King in refusing them practically say, ‘I forbid you to win’? Could one then say he had made even a formal defence of the country?”

No Girondin ever pushed matters to a resolute conclusion, and Vergniaud ended his harangue mildly by saying that he had no doubt that the King would fulfil his constitutional rôle; but he proposed that a message should be sent him from the Assembly begging him to choose between France and a foreign country, and informing him that the French nation was willing either to perish or to triumph with the Constitution. Driven into a corner, the King saw at last that the time had come when he must sanction the arrival of the *Fédérés* in Paris and their establishment in a permanent camp at Soissons. He realised clearly that it might make things more difficult for the Allies, but, at the same time, it was useless to continue to withhold his sanction from a measure he was powerless to prevent being carried into effect, so on the 2nd of July he withdrew his veto.<sup>1</sup>

On the 4th of July the Assembly, thoroughly alive to the dangers of the situation, decreed that when extraordinary measures seemed indispensable, it would declare them necessary by the formula, “the country is in danger.”<sup>2</sup> On the 5th, Ministers were requested to make a report

<sup>1</sup> Madelin, *Rév. Fr.*, p. 226.

<sup>2</sup> Sorel, *L'Europe et la Révolution Française*, vol. ii. p. 489.



on the state of the kingdom. This report was not presented till the 9th, and meanwhile, day by day, in the Assembly enthusiasm for the Constitution seemed to grow. The famous scene known to history as the *Baiser Lamourette*<sup>1</sup> shows the temper of the House. Lamourette, Constitutional Bishop of Rhône-et-Loire, declared that all the troubles of France had their origin in dissension, and moved that any person proposing to alter the Constitution in any way whatever should be held up to public execration. The Assembly jumped to its feet as one man, and voted this proposal, and, in a wave of emotion, each man kissed his neighbour: differences were forgotten in love of "*La Patrie*." The King was present, and made a speech, in the course of which he said: "The nation and the King form one whole, they advance to the same goal, their reunited efforts will save France." Leaving the hall amidst loud acclamations, he went back to the Tuileries, congratulating himself on the manner in which he was weathering the storm, and smiling to think that that very day, Pétion, the Mayor of Paris, had at his instigation been suspended by the Department for the way he had behaved over the invasion of the Tuileries.

The incident of the *Baiser Lamourette* and the suspension of Pétion, coming as they did at the same time, made some people suspicious. Could the Lamourette affair have been a put-up job, men wondered, to re-establish the King in public favour, to prevent the Assembly declaring the country in danger? Brissot and his supporters

<sup>1</sup> July 7.

had given formal notice of their intention to move a resolution to this effect, and then somehow the King had appeared in the Assembly, and this rather ridiculous, emotional scene had taken place. No Assembly could be expected to vote the country in danger in such a mood, so Brissot had regretfully withdrawn his motion, though he knew how imminent the peril was. Soon after the King had left the Riding School, men were reminded that all was not well with Paris. Municipal officers began to file into the Assembly, to deplore the unexpected suspension of Pétion and to beg to be allowed to share his fate. Every one was puzzled to know how and why it was that the departmental authorities had fulfilled the King's wish in removing him from office. Meanwhile the King, who certainly had not realised that Pétion was half deified by the people of Paris and was known to them as Aristides, Socrates and the New Messiah, began to realise that very evening of the 7th of July, when angry crowds surged round his Palace, that it was not altogether a safe move to get rid of a popular Mayor so summarily. On the following day he found himself obliged ignominiously to reconsider his decision.

On the 9th, Mercy, the Austrian Ambassador in Paris, wrote to the Queen: "It is everything to gain time. The armies will invade the first days of August. In a month all will be saved."<sup>1</sup> On the 10th, Brissot moved the resolution he had meant to propose on the 7th, adding the rider, "that an inquiry be held into the conduct of the King."

<sup>1</sup> Sorel, *L'Europe et la Révolution Française*, vol. ii. p. 489.

On the 11th the Assembly declared the country to be in danger, and arranged that it should be publicly proclaimed in danger throughout the length and breadth of France on the 22nd of July. As a reason for this decision the Assembly stated that "numerous enemy troops were advancing to the frontiers, and that all those to whom the very word Liberty is a horror were arming themselves against the Constitution."<sup>1</sup> Pétion was re-established in his Mayoral office on the 13th of July and promptly became the hero of the hour.

During these critical days the Rolands were living in their little furnished flat in the rue de la Harpe, the retreat to which they had fled on the evening of Roland's dismissal from office. Madame Roland tells us that they were very quiet and stayed much at home; but it is quite incredible to any one who knew her that she should have consented to slip out of affairs, and indeed everything points to her being very well informed of every movement of the Girondin party. For example, she writes to Bancal on the 7th of July, the day of the *Baiser Lamourette*, to beg him to read *Les Annales patriotiques et littéraires*, a newspaper edited by Carra and Mercier. She says that in it he will find "projects," that these projects are shaping well. There is nothing in *Les Annales* to warrant this recommendation on 7th July, but on 9th July we find over the signature of Carra a complete plan in ten clauses for a *legal* insurrection. This indicates that Madame Roland was well aware of this plan before its publication. As usual, she was in the van of thought and

<sup>1</sup> Chassin and Hamet, *Les Volontaires Nationaux*, vol. i. p. 323.

action; as usual, old schemes having failed she was contriving new ones.

The Rolands in their "philosophical retreat" were, as a matter of fact, far from idle. Barbaroux is careful to let us know that many and many a conference in which the future of Liberty and of *La Patrie* was discussed, were held in that sitting-room upholstered in yellow Utrecht velvet. One day Servan, Barbaroux and the Rolands were asking each other how France was to be saved, Roland said, "Liberty is lost in that the plots of the Court cannot be countermined." Lafayette, he feared, was plotting treason in the North, and Lückner's army of the centre he believed to be far too disorganised to make a successful defence of the frontier; everything pointed to the Austrians being in Paris in six weeks. Roland thought it probable that France would be invaded from the North, and that owing to the circumstances enumerated the King would be re-established on his throne without great difficulty. He therefore suggested to Barbaroux and Servan the possibility of dividing the country in two, and of founding in the southern half a Republic which should be the shrine of Liberty. In Barbaroux and his own wife he had ardent sympathisers with his scheme; tears rolled down their cheeks as they listened to his words: "If Liberty dies in France it is lost for ever to the rest of the world; all the hopes of the philosophers are indeed undone and the cruellest tyranny will oppress the earth. Let us prevent this misfortune; let us arm Paris and the departments of the North: or if they succumb, let us carry the Statue of Liberty to the

South and somewhere found a colony of independent men." The spirit of the South was high as Barbaroux, the man from Marseilles, well knew, and Liberty, even if menaced in the North, might still, he urged, be worshipped in another part of France.

Earnestly these men and this woman pored over large maps of France ; just as Gambetta and De Freycinet did later on before they decided to transfer the seat of Government to Tours. Together they traced the limits of the two future realms, Servan studying the military positions and calculating what men it might be possible to recruit, Roland arranging for magazines of supplies to be established in the centre and the South and for Saint Etienne to be made secure because of its manufactory of small arms, and Barbaroux pointing out that the Arsenal of Brest was quite indispensable for their purpose.

Each one of them tried to think of the places and persons which would be of use in the coming struggle, and kept assuring one another that a revolution which had given birth to such wonderful hopes could not be allowed to end in slavery. They must attempt to establish a free Government somewhere, even if they were to die for it. The responsibility for originating the plan of bringing the *Fédérés* to Paris was Madame Roland's. Servan and Barbaroux approved of all her ideas and carried them out, and probably it was Madame Roland who inspired Vergniaud, Brissot and other Girondins to prevail on the Assembly to invite these territorial troops to the capital despite the Royal veto. Barbaroux's letter summoning



Marseillais “ who knew how to die ” to march to Paris is so characteristic of Madame Roland that one is inclined to believe she dictated the letter—a letter which was to be the cause of great events.

The contrast between the organisers of national defence and the organisers of invasion is piquant, and it might have been some consolation to patriots in those early July days to look to Frankfort-on-the-Rhine, where the King of Bohemia and Hungary was being elected<sup>1</sup> and crowned<sup>2</sup> Emperor of Austria. The rescuers of the King and Queen of France were dancing and banqueting and reviewing troops, and laughing over the sans-culottes of Paris who soon were to be so well punished by the smart regiments marching through Frankfort that week to the farcical invasion of France. The Coronation over, the Emperor of Austria and King of Prussia repaired to the Palace of the Elector of Mayence, where more balls, banquets and reviews were held, and where the final touches were put to the manifesto which the Duke of Brunswick was to issue to the people of France. Queen Marie Antoinette, the Emperor’s aunt, was indeed right : no mercy ought to be meted out to the insolent ruffians of Paris who had so defiled the precincts of the King’s Palace.

During the week in which the King of Bohemia and Hungary made his first appearance as Emperor of Austria, Louis XVI. made his last appearance as King of France. On the day of the Feast of Federation about 100,000 persons straggled along the rue Saint Honoré to the *Champs de Mars*, and written in chalk on most of their hats were the

<sup>1</sup> July 5.

<sup>2</sup> July 12.

words, "*Vive Pétion.*" There were no priests as in 1790<sup>1</sup> to celebrate the feast, but eighty-three tents stood there figuring the eighty-three Departments of France, and beside each tent was a poplar, the tree of Liberty, from the top of which floated a tricolour pennant. One large tent was destined for the King and the Assembly, and the ostensible purpose of the gathering was to renew the oath of fidelity to the Constitution. The Altar of the Country was damaged, but its remains were still raised on steps as of old. A new monument to those who had died or were about to die for their country stood on one side of this Altar. On the other was a very large tree, called the Feudal tree. From its branches hung crowns, *cordons bleus*, keys of St. Peter, ermine mantles, shields, coats of arms, titles of nobility. The King was supposed to set fire to it. A great crowd, shouting "*Pétion ou la mort !*" streamed on to the ground in time for the midday oath. The King climbed the steps of the Altar and once more swore to uphold the Constitution he hated and would betray, but he refused to set fire to the big tree, as he said it would be a farce, since there was no vestige of feudality left in France. This rather ridiculous occasion was the last on which Louis was destined to appear as a reigning king.

To every one's surprise the ceremony ended peaceably, without anti-Royalist demonstrations, and this in spite of the newspaper campaign which was raging against the King, against "this crowned Tartuffe, our domestic and constitutional enemy, Louis the false," from whom some of

<sup>1</sup> There was no feast at all in 1791, because of the Flight.

the journals demanded resignation, and for whom some advocated the scaffold.

In accordance with the resolution of the Assembly on the 11th, the country was publicly proclaimed in danger on the 22nd of the month.<sup>1</sup> The face of France was transformed: the spirit of the Revolution, of nationalism, irradiated the remotest agricultural districts. All departmental and municipal councils automatically became permanent, all citizens able to bear arms automatically became soldiers. Under pain of imprisonment, every man had to go before his municipality and declare what weapons he owned, so that superfluous armament might be requisitioned. France was stirred to its most rural depths. Many a peasant went from the plough in these summer days to pin on his tricolour cockade—a soldier. The country, his country, was in danger, and that

<sup>1</sup> Everything was carefully thought out and prearranged, and the ceremonial to be observed in Paris on July 22 and 23 was as follows:

At 6 a.m. the six legions of the National Guard were to assemble on La Place de Grève with their colours. At 7 a.m. the Council-General was to assemble at the Maison Commune. From 6 a.m. to 7 p.m. guns in the Artillery Park of the Pont Neuf and the Arsenal were ordered to fire three rounds every hour. A *rappel* was to be beaten everywhere, and two *cortèges* of Municipal officers escorted by cavalry and artillery with bands, executing “des aires majestueux et sévères” were to make the proclamation at various prearranged places. In eight open spaces (Place Royale, Place du Théâtre, du Carré Saint Martin, Parrois Notre Dame, Place Dauphine, Estrapade, Place Maubert, Place Théâtre Français) amphitheatres were erected as well as tents ornamented with tricolours and crowns of oak leaves. An improvised table of two drums and a board served as bureau for inscribing the names of volunteers. The Municipal certificate of enrolment was drawn up as follows:

“Nous Maire, officiers Municipaux, et Membres du Conseil-général de la Ville de Paris certifions que M—— citoyen ayant entendu la voix des Représentants du Peuple, qui appelait les Français à la défense de la Patrie en danger, s’est présenté plein d’une ardeur civique pour dévouer sa vie en servant dans les Bataillons du Département de Paris. Son dévouement a été couronné par les applaudissements du Peuple, le 22 du mois de Juillet 1792.”

meant that the King in his capacity of Defender had somehow failed, and that France must save herself. With breathless excitement Madame Roland learnt of the enthusiasm evoked by the proclamation. Volunteers she says sprang from the earth. Fifteen thousand Paris men enrolled themselves at once, and numbers of women offered to engage. Many of these people went to the Riding School to declare their patriotism. Of one batch of lads their officer said: "If I had only consulted appearances the height of some of them might have stood in the way of their being accepted, but I placed my hand on their hearts and not their heads under the measure; these hearts were burning with patriotism."

During this week of ferment in France strange decisive things were happening beyond the Rhine. The Queen had heard through her secret agents that the Assembly was to transfer itself to Blois, and that the King was to be suspended.<sup>1</sup> Delay must be fatal to them both, and once more she entreated her nephew to dispatch the manifesto "terrifying to the French nation" at once: it was awaited with "extreme impatience." The document in question had been drawn up by M. Lemoine, an *émigré*; Fersen and Calonne deemed it admirably suited to its purpose. Indeed it won the approval of Bouillé, Mercy, the Emperor of Austria and the King of Prussia. Brunswick in his capacity of generalissimo of the invading army was expected to sign it. He affixed his name to it on the 25th of July, and a year later would have

<sup>1</sup> Queen to Fersen, July 24.



given his life not to have done so.<sup>1</sup> The letter itself was a mere diplomatic impertinence and ineptly conceived. The mission of the invading armies was set forth as an endeavour to put down anarchy, to stop the attacks on King and Church and enable Louis XVI. once more to exercise his Royal authority. It was no invasion of conquest or enrichment, and did not contemplate concerning itself with administration; it would protect all who submitted to the King but would punish National Guards or those who offered resistance as "rebels." The inhabitants "who dare defend themselves" were to be dealt with according to "the rigorous laws of war," their "houses would be demolished and burnt." Paris and all its inhabitants were ordered to submit to the King. The members of the Assembly and of the administration were to be held responsible for all eventualities; they too were to be punished "militarily" and with no hope of pardon. "If the slightest violence, the slightest outrage, is shown to the Royal Family, the Allies will execute summary and exemplary and ever memorable vengeance by giving Paris up to military execution and total subversion." "The rebels would then have to endure the last tortures." The Duke of Brunswick received an anonymous communication on the subject of the manifesto from one who took interest in his reputation.

This unknown writer began by alluding to his previous letter of 18th June to the King of Prussia, and goes on to say :

"It is impossible that this Manifesto should be yours.

<sup>1</sup> A. Sorel, *L'Europe et la Révolution Française*, vol. ii. p. 510.



It is too impolitic, too unsuitable to the circumstances, too unworthy of the most enlightened Sovereign of Germany, or indeed of Europe. Such a production could only have been imagined by the foolish brains of the Tuileries Court. A Manifesto so interesting to all peoples, and which was addressed to a nation so rich in intelligent men—men who know how to think and to speak—such a Manifesto, I say, should have been couched in a style and should have expressed ideas worthy of the greatness and the prudence of the Princes who have allied themselves against France. Such an Act should not have contained injurious calumnies, and least of all threats. So great a cause should have been pleaded with art, of which the authors of the Manifesto have obviously no knowledge. The document now circulating clandestinely is so peculiar that no one would undertake to refute it, and so I am putting it on one side in order to discuss the hostilities that Your Serene Highness is about to undertake against France.

“ I have spent a great part of my life as a soldier. I have travelled, principally in the States of the North, and it is inconceivable to me who have personally known Princes, Ministers and great men, that any one should have allowed himself to be taken in by the French Princes and emigrants, who are generally famous for their ignorance, their immorality and their proud contempt for all strangers. It surprises me that they have been able for a moment to upset your judgment, and, Sir, this they must have done since you have accepted a commission to lead the united armies of Austria and Brandenburg. No doubt they have made you believe that France is torn by factions, that civil war will break out in all the provinces as soon as the troops reach the frontiers. In telling you that they had secret information about the Court of Louis xvi., about the army, about the fortresses that were to be given up to German troops, no doubt these emigrants omitted to tell you that in all these places there are people filled with the zeal of the new

order of things. . . . They have deceived you, Sir, in telling you that you will only have to fight a handful of malcontents. This handful consists of nineteen-twentieths of the nation, seized by the most violent passion for a new divinity, to which French people give the name of Liberty. Fathers and sons, girls and women, make every conceivable sacrifice to this idol. Every one is giving his fortune or his arm for the defence of his country. For this ideal every one light-heartedly suffers fatigue, misery and death. . . . I am not German or French, or democrat or aristocrat, Sir ; I am a stranger to all parties. I see things impartially. I am calm in the midst of storms. . . . I have a particular veneration for Your Serene Highness, and I dare to tell you that the enterprise you have undertaken is beyond human power.

“ You have merited your brilliant reputation as a great captain ; you have merited your title to be a good governor of your peoples. Sir, do not risk tarnishing your laurels, losing your glory, effacing your name from the temple of memory, obscuring it by a tyrannical war as unjust as it is impolitic, since its essential aim is to raise up new barriers between thrones and people. . . . How is it, Sir, that since you have been in the neighbourhood of France you have not realised that you have been imposed upon by the assurance that civil war will commence, Sir, as soon as your troops begin to move ? How is it that you do not know that ever since the Revolution Frenchmen have never been more united, more energetic, more patriotic than now that they see your troops advancing against them ? Please deign to observe that the National Assembly issues more and more vigorous decrees as you approach the country it represents, that Parisians, far from being intimidated by horrors, sit quietly on Committees and discuss the deposition of their King. . . . Your entry into France, Sir, far from making Frenchmen fall at the feet of Louis XVI., will do nothing but precipitate the dethronement of this Prince.

. . . . .

“Sir, I should indeed be happy if the truths in this letter could dissipate the clouds which now obscure the horizon of your genius.”<sup>1</sup>

This letter can have been of no comfort to Brunswick in his misgivings, and possibly may have had something to do with the half-heartedness of the way in which he conducted the invasion of France and the celerity with which he left her soil.

The Brunswick manifesto was known in Paris on the 28th of July and caused intense indignation to patriots ; it proved more positively than ever to Madame Roland the prime importance of having incorruptible Federal troops in the capital. She and her husband, with Buzot, who was on leave from Evreux, and Lanthénas, eagerly discussed the manifesto, the impending arrival of the Marseillais and the possibility of turning their march to good account. What a moment it was for the men “who knew how to die” to enter the capital singing their marching song ! What wonder was it that in the eyes not only of Madame Roland and her friends, but in those of thousands of patriots, the combination of events and circumstances made the “Marseillaise” seem the only possible answer to the Austrian threat ! And so it came about that the song of the Army of the Rhine became the battle-cry of French patriotism shouted out to Europe. Yet though the “Marseillaise” was the most dramatic it was not the most complete answer to the manifesto. Madame Roland and her friends, on reflection, saw that a reply of even greater force than the lilt of that famous song

<sup>1</sup> *Revue Historique de la Révolution Française*, vol. i. pp. 553-8.

was the immediate suspension of the King. For what use could there be in sending volunteers to the frontier if in the capital behind their backs there was a highly-placed and well-informed person to betray the movement of troops and the plans of generals to the enemy they were about to fight? Every day it became more vitally apparent that the King must be removed, and that it was indeed the only way of turning the German manifesto into a dead letter. Rumours came filtering through to patriots of how lightly the Austrians talked of "the promenade to Paris," of how gaily they were arranging to winter in the capital, and soon the people of Paris whose brothers and sons were marching to the frontier to die resolved to take the management of affairs in hand themselves.

Public opinion might be gauged in all sorts of ways; for example, many of the inhabitants of the capital had been extremely annoyed to be deprived for several weeks of their promenade in the garden of the Tuileries. They still, however, had the enjoyment of the Feuillant Terrace, which was a fashionable resort dotted with cafés. When the King took it into his head to give them back the use of the whole Tuileries garden again, they refused this privilege, and separated the terrace from the rest of the garden by a tricolour ribbon, which served as a barrier and which was respected by all the people of Paris. One day a lady accidentally broke through this ribbon and walked on Tuileries soil. She at once removed her shoes "to shake off the dust of Austria"!

The publication<sup>1</sup> of the manifesto had the

<sup>1</sup> August 3.



effect of consolidating opinion and of fusing the ideas of National Security and Republic. To some minds they became synonymous. Robespierre at the Jacobin Club demanded the deposition of the King and received unanimous support. Danton pledged himself "to carry Terror to a perverse Court." The Clubs were working against the King, Paris itself was against him, for the sections were drawing up petitions for his deposition. The only body which appeared at all conservative was the Assembly, and it fell rapidly in public estimation, for it seemed to the man in the street to be merely marking time. In reality it was on the horns of a dilemma, and its members were hunting about for some sort of compromise, since they could not destroy the Assembly and the Constitution by voting the deposition of the King. In a letter of advice written during these critical days<sup>1</sup> Madame Roland shows much political wisdom and gives us the key to the apparently apathetic attitude of the Assembly. In their capacity as upholders of the Constitution it was impossible for members to countenance the idea of deposition, which in itself would be an annulment of the Constitution. The utmost penalty that could legally be imposed on the King for his treachery was provisional suspension pending the verdict of a National Convention. This sentence might quite well be twisted out of the Constitution. Seeing the constitutional objections to deposition so clearly, she tried through Lanthénas, Robespierre and other members of the Jacobin Club to dissuade the sections from

<sup>1</sup> July 31.



petitioning the Assembly for the deposition, and tried to divert them into more constitutional lines of advance. The fact of having been in office seemed to have steadied her; she knew what responsibility meant, and she also knew that very soon it might be her husband's duty to try once more to work the Constitution. As Mirabeau said: "*Jacobin ministre n'est pas toujours un ministre jacobin.*"

Public opinion, however, was moving faster than either the Assembly or Madame Roland realised. An irresistible tide of national instinct had begun to flow, liberated after centuries of repression, and in its flowing endangered all authorities, even the most democratic. In spite of Madame Roland's efforts to divert the sections from drawing up petitions, Members of Parliament were soon faced with the necessity of coming to an immediate decision over Louis XVI.'s position, for Pétion, the Mayor, appeared at their Tribune<sup>1</sup> on the day the manifesto was published as bearer of an address from the city wards demanding the deposition of the King before 9th August. The suddenness of the ultimatum seemed to stun the members, although they had had a week in which to consider the possible effects of the German ultimatum. Vergniaud, whose party was as unready as any other to meet the crisis, weakly adjourned the discussion on this resolution in order to take counsel privately with his colleagues. Vainly did Madame Roland try to make the Gironde adopt her solution of the difficulty—suspension pending the verdict of a National Convention; she talked and talked and wrote and wrote; but it was all no good—her

<sup>1</sup> August 3.

men simply would not act, they were content to drift. When she found that it was impossible to impose her ideas either on the city crowd or on the Brissotin party she in despair persuaded Roland to apply for a passport to leave Paris. At least it was open to them to influence, possibly to organise, public opinion in the South.

The days succeeding Pétion's appearance at the bar of the Assembly passed in a sort of uproar ; insults fell from the galleries on deputies, and debates were violently interrupted. On the 9th of August, the last day of grace given by the sections to the Assembly for deposing the King, Roederer, a departmental official, informed the House that one section of the city at any rate had decided to ring the tocsin that night and to march upon the Tuileries if the House did not at once order the King's deposition. Pétion was as anxious as the Girondist members to avoid bloodshed, so, after conferring with Vergniaud and other party leaders, he went in his capacity of Mayor to the Jacobin Club and entreated Chabot to stave off the insurrection which threatened, as the Assembly had decided to suspend the King provisionally and to convoke a National Convention without delay. Chabot said there was nothing to hope from such an Assembly, and told Pétion he was a dupe, and that since the people had resolved to save themselves the tocsin would ring that night. The Assembly, on hearing this news, rose at 7 p.m., and members scattered in every direction like frightened hares, although technically since the country had been declared in danger they were sitting in permanence.

No one knew whose life was safe. Many people went into hiding that hot and thundery evening. Robespierre disappeared, so did Marat; Danton alone appeared openly and spoke at the Cordeliers Club. From its rostrum he recapitulated the history of the past few months : the crimes of the Court, the King's hatred for the Constitution, his deceitful words, his hypocritical promises. He urged the people to save themselves, and that soon, for that very night he knew that a sortie was to be made from the Tuileries, a sortie preparatory to the massacre of the people; the King was going to Coblenz. Not long after he had done speaking the great bell of the Cordeliers began to toll. It was close on midnight, and in a few minutes responses lugubriously sounded from several other belfries—the Revolution had at last begun.

There were cries of "To arms! To arms!" and as members left the precincts of the Cordeliers Club they found the Marseillais formed up at its doors. Camille Desmoulins, Fabre and other emissaries were dispatched by Danton to warn all the city sections of the importance of catching the King should he attempt to escape, and commissioners, chosen from among the sections, were sent, according to previous arrangement, to the Hôtel de Ville to replace the existing Municipal Council and take over its powers.

The new authority created by Danton in Paris that night was composed of eighty-two elected representatives of the sections. These representatives were empowered to act for Paris, and were authorised to form the new insurrectionary Commune. They began their work of recon-

struction during the night of 9th August at the Hôtel de Ville; by 8 a.m. the next morning they had dissolved the legal Commune, though keeping on Pétion as Mayor of Paris, and co-opting the Procureur and sixteen officers of the old Commune on to the new body. In this way the actual routine and office work was not interfered with. The new authority began to negotiate with the Assembly at midday on the 10th, and in a helpless sort of way the Assembly responded to this advance by charging the Commune to stop the insurrection at the Tuileries, round which place the tide of the people was already surging. The House of Representatives, it seemed, was only too willing to recognise the new power as the Municipality so long as it would undertake to keep order in the city, and on this condition was even glad to vote it supplies of money. The new authority at once proceeded to augment itself by election, and finally comprised 288 persons, amongst whom Robespierre, Billaud-Varennes and Marat were included. No wonder that Madame Roland rubbed her eyes with astonishment when she heard of the night's work from Pétion! On the morning of the 9th of August no power, no authority, had been anywhere visible to her; it looked as if Paris were to be the quiescent camp of Brunswick's troops. By the 11th a force, an authority, had quietly organised itself, a force which Madame Roland thought might supplant the Assembly and all the Clubs. To Danton was the credit alone due. In his capacity of Vice-Procureur<sup>1</sup> to the City

<sup>1</sup> January 31, 1792.

Council he had been able to organise through the sections this marvellous *coup d'état*.

The King, who had been kept well informed of the state of public opinion during the early days of August, had meanwhile been preparing for the final struggle. The Queen, who believed it to be only a matter of days before rescue would come, urged him to make a stout defence; she pointed out that if once he fell into the hands of the people, life might be lost before one had time to think. It was the hour to fight, not to yield, and in order to fight certain steps had to be taken. The Swiss Guard, which had been nominally banished from Paris and quartered in the suburbs,<sup>1</sup> was on the 9th of August brought back to occupy the Tuileries; it numbered about 1200 men; in addition to this regiment there were 1800 men, National Guards, gentlemen and others, ready to garrison the Palace. The King had no reason to despair—the arsenals were his, the army was nominally loyal to him, and so was a good proportion, perhaps half, of the National Guard. The Commandant of the Parisian National Guard, Mandat, a Royalist, had posted a battery at the bridge-head, by which alone a mob from across the river could advance on the Tuileries. He had also posted cavalry and another battery at the Hôtel de Ville, by which route the rest of Paris might attack the Tuileries. Mandat, we must remember, was the soul of the Royal defence—his was the plan, his the execution. The Queen believed that he could save them all.

At midnight on the 9th–10th August, while the

<sup>1</sup> L. Madelin, *La Révolution*, p. 237.



bells were tolling and striking terror into the hearts of the Court, Pétion was sent for to the Palace to sign an order to repulse force by force. Four hours later he was still there—the Royalists meant to retain him as hostage—but the Commune summoned him to appear before them, and to the Queen's regret he quitted the Tuileries, leaving Mandat still in charge of the situation. Directly the new Commune at the Hôtel de Ville had interviewed Pétion and seen Mandat's orders for the defence of the Palace, they summoned this officer also to appear before them. Mandat was most unwilling to leave the Tuileries, but the King and his advisers, unaware of what had happened during the night, persuaded him to go to the Hôtel de Ville, where they imagined Pétion wished to consult with him. The new Commune cross-examined Mandat as to the orders he had issued, and then dismissed him. On his way out he was by Danton's order murdered, stripped and thrown into the river. His failure to reappear at the Palace disorganised the plans of Royal defence; in fact, the expected siege was over though it had not even begun. The Queen, whose spirit rose with danger, begged the King to employ the time of suspense by holding a last review of the soldiers in the Tuileries Garden. It was a dreadful failure, for in the sunny morning light the King looked particularly abject. He was dishevelled and weary, and as he stumbled along the lines said in a spiritless way to each company, "*J'aime la garde nationale.*" At seven he went back to the Palace. Roederer suggested that as all Paris was marching on them, it would be best

to capitulate, to take refuge in the Riding School perhaps. The Queen wanted to fight to the end, and how much better it would have been to do so; but on this departmental official saying, "*Le temps presse*," the King said, "*Marchons!*" and they walked ignominiously to the Riding School, following Roederer and followed by Ministers and National Guards. The King showed no fear, but he also showed no spirit, no initiative, and at 9 a.m. the Royal Family sat down quietly in the logographer's box of the Assembly. It was an absurd way of abdicating. How right Mirabeau had been in saying that the most formidable menace to the Monarchy in France was Louis XVI.'s own character!

The sound of firing and shouting presently penetrated to the box, and on Roederer's advice the King signed an order to his men to cease fire; it was only 10 o'clock, but the cause of Monarchy was already lost. At 9 p.m. the King and Queen were still sitting in their stifling little box, hardly realising their position; but it was made abundantly clear to them when the Assembly, constrained by the pressure of events, recognised and registered the popular will, and decreed "the suspension" of the King "pending the verdict of a National Convention." That very evening the deputies took a new oath: "In the name of the nation I swear to maintain liberty and equality with all my power or else to die at my post." They then voted the summoning of a National Convention to pronounce what measures should be adopted to assure the sovereignty of the people and the reign of liberty and equality.

The charge of the Royal Family was assumed to be the responsibility of the Assembly, and the Luxembourg was first placed at their disposal as a residence; a few minutes later it was changed to the Hôtel de la Justice. The Commune protested at this infringement of their powers; to them alone belonged the right of disposing of the King's person. The Assembly at once surrendered its claim, and the new authority consigned Capet and his family out of all possible sphere of action to the Temple.

Now that the King was in fact a prisoner and the throne empty, it was resolved to constitute a Provisional Executive Council of six to take the place of the old Constitutional Cabinet. This Executive was to be elected by the Assembly and was to hold office till such time as the Convention could be assembled.

To the first Minister elected it was agreed to grant the power of signing for all offices so long as the said offices should be vacant. The Ministers were chosen by a small House of 285 members, and it was interesting to see the various degrees of popularity accruing to the names put forward. Danton was elected Minister of Justice by 222 out of 285 votes, whereas Monge was elected Minister of Marine by 154 votes. Then Le Brun and Grouvelle were put up for Foreign Affairs; the first obtained 109 votes, the second 91. Grouvelle, as a consolation, was made Secretary to the Council. The Provisional Executive was completed by recalling the three patriot Ministers, Roland, Servan and Clavières, to their original offices. It was arranged that each Minister should preside over the Council for a week, and

the Council itself was charged with all the functions of the executive power, but, as men were soon to realise, the only power that really animated it was the will of Danton. And so Madame Roland, after two months' absence, was able to leave her humble little blue bedroom, and take up her abode once more in a vast apartment frescoed with gods and goddesses, and sleep uneasily in a grand bed under a dais of white plumes.

## CHAPTER XIII

### SECOND PERIOD OF OFFICE

“L’homme trop scrupuleux ne sera jamais heroïque. Si Jeanne d’Arc eut songé à sa mère elle n’eût pas sauvé la patrie.”—*Remarques et Pensées*,  
EUGÈNE MARBEAU.

EARLY in the morning of the 11th of August Camille Desmoulins and Fabre d’Eglantine went to wake Danton, who was sleeping heavily after his great exertions. Fabre said, “You must make me Secretary of the Seal,” “And me a secretary too,” cried Camille. Danton, still half-asleep, asked, “But are you quite sure I am nominated Minister?” “Yes,” they shouted; and straightway he appointed the author of *Philinte* and the editor of *Révolutions de France et de Brabant* to be his secretaries.<sup>1</sup> M. Robert, with whom, as we know, the Rolands would have nothing to do when in office, succeeded in imposing himself on Danton as another secretary. Later in the day the new Minister approached Robespierre and begged him to assist him in his official work. Robespierre refused point-blank. It was a bitter blow for him not to have been included in the Ministry.

In Georges Jacques Danton, the greatest political figure of the whole Revolution came into office. In appearance he was what Madame

<sup>1</sup> Aulard, *Études et Leçons*, vol. vi. p. 215.



Roland called "a burly patriot," in character he was resolute and resourceful, in mind original. Well educated and lettered, knowing Latin, Italian and English, he had passed his law examinations brilliantly, and as a young man, recovering from illness, had read through all the fifty-six volumes of the *Encyclopædia*. He greatly admired Rousseau and Voltaire, and above all England and the English. In his library were the works of Shakespeare, Pope, Richardson, Robertson, Johnson, Adam Smith. He could converse easily both in English <sup>1</sup> and Italian.

We find in him the same tastes and the same education as in Madame Roland, the same patriotism, the same deism, the same desire to work for the general good. He was a simple, emphatic orator of memorable metaphor and phrase, and there is nothing more to be said about his patriotism than he said himself, "I would embrace my enemy for the sake of my country, I would give my body to my country to devour," and again, "Everything belongs to the country when the country is in danger." Danton was to be the soul and fibre of national defence that August. Some kind of a realist was needed in a Council composed of bureaucratic idealists if the Prussians were not to spend the winter in Paris.

When Madame Roland heard that Jacques Danton had been elected to the Provisional Executive Council she was sorry. To her mind it seemed a pity "to spoil" the Ministry by adding to it a man with "such a bad reputation." She had

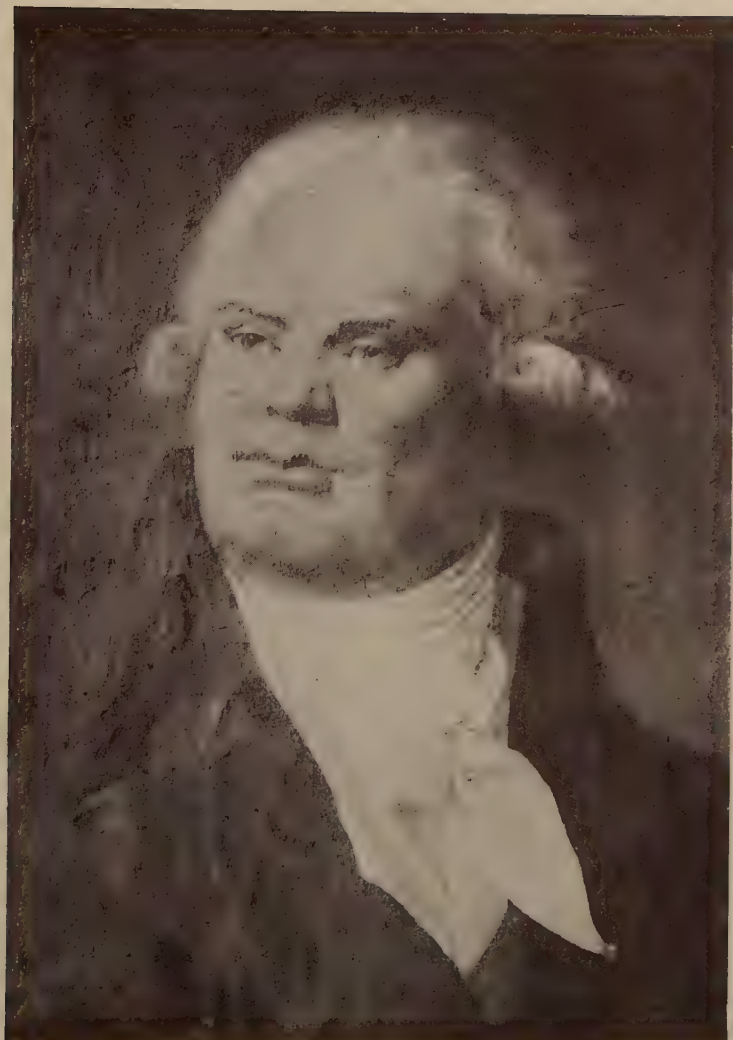
<sup>1</sup> He was in London August 1791 with Dr. Christie, and knew Fox, Thomas Payne, Horne-Tooke, etc.

heard him speak at the Jacobin Club, and there he seemed to her a strong, rough man, "ferocious in face and probably in heart," with a kind of bacchanalian joviality about him, an emphatic speaker of violent gesture and many oaths. She had never made acquaintance with him, and did not believe the friends who told her that it was better to have such a man working with the government machine rather than against it. Deeply prejudiced against Danton and believing him to be brutal, self-seeking and ambitious, Madame Roland, with truly human curiosity, nevertheless welcomed the chance that brought her in contact with him and so enabled her to investigate his personality.

They saw a good deal of each other during the first weeks of office, and never did a day pass during August but "Cyclops" called on her, and that generally in the most informal, friendly way. He always tried to talk and make her talk of patriotism, and very often asked for a bowl of soup; he was too busy to trouble about regular meals. In spite of her prejudice Madame Roland was really quite won over by him. He seemed such a true, great-hearted lover of his country that she began to think that he was not such an incongruous addition to a Girondin Ministry as she had at first feared. One day, however, her new-born confidence was shattered by a chance remark made by his inseparable companion and secretary, Fabre d'Eglantine. It was a critical moment for Prussian troops had just crossed the frontier. Strong measures had to be taken by Government; the Executive was meeting twice a day. "It's all very well," said Fabre to Madame Roland,

“but the Government ought to be concentrated in the Executive, and the President ought to be given dictatorial powers; it is the only way to obtain the rapidity of decision necessary to save France.” Madame Roland was aghast. In a flash she saw the figure of Danton towering over the prostrate French people. At last she had divined his true ambition, at last she understood, and disapproving with all the strength of her being, she then and there became rigidly and vehemently opposed to Danton and all his works. What dire consequences this enmity was to bring about no one then could guess, but to us it is given to realise that by indulging this theoretical hate of Dictatorship Madame Roland was bringing about the downfall of her party and its ideals. We must not forget that women, far more than men, are the devotees of the bare idea, and are unwilling to sacrifice principle to practice. It is their glory and their weakness. Many people have blamed Madame Roland for having prevented the amalgamation of Dantonist and Girondist powers in one government, for not having compromised, but to say this is not to understand Madame Roland. Danton, in spite of his later efforts for co-operation, could not work *with* people any more than she could, he had to work *over* people, to direct subordinates; his supreme vitality and executive ability were felt by the whole Cabinet; he was essentially a dominator and not a colleague.

And indeed how could a man of supreme administrative ability, of great common sense, of rapid and far-reaching resolution, work on an equality with a lot of red-tape theorists who,



DANTON

*From a portrait in the Musée Carnavalet*





because of their incapability as much as their inexperience, were afraid to move outside the ordinary routine work of the departments? That sort of thing is all very well in times of peace, but when an enemy has crossed the frontier something else is wanted—then the crying need is measures and men to fit the situation.

If we look at Danton's colleagues for a moment we shall realise that they were not fitted to deal with a national crisis. Roland we know to be an admirable, honest, hard-working departmental chief, sixty years old. Monge, who was in charge of the Admiralty, was a friend of Condorcet's, with a genius for mathematics and no experience of men or of affairs—the sort of man who would naturally take refuge in official routine, and who, moreover, was terrified of Danton. Le Brun, who was in charge of the Foreign Office, had been a clerk in that department. He could write a good letter and could name the personnel of the various embassies in Europe, though he knew nothing of the diplomacy of the countries themselves. He was idle, originated nothing, had no conception of what it meant to stand for a definite foreign policy, and took no steps to try and stop the invasion through representations at foreign courts. Clavières and Servan we already know to be industrious, honest Ministers, without a touch of the political insight necessary in moments of crisis.

The only person who was in any sense as resolute, as administrative, as daring as Danton, was Roland's wife. Together they might have ruled France; separated they brought each other to the ground. For Madame Roland made it

her business to inspire all who would heed her with distrust of the Minister for Justice, and effectually prevented the men of her circle from working loyally with him.

Roland's first preoccupation on resuming office was the reorganisation of his own department. Under the old régime he had been unable to dismiss any one, because all the clerks held a commission straight from the King; now he was able to appoint as his subordinates people he already knew and trusted. Champagneux, for example, resigned his post as Vice-Procureur to the Lyons Commune and took over the first division of the Home Office. He tells us something of his busy days there: "I read all the letters for the Minister and thought out the replies from 5 a.m. till 10 a.m. From that hour till midday I conferred with the Minister; I took his decisions and his signatures. At twelve I went back to my bureau and interviewed the public till 4 p.m. The rest of the day, except for eating and occasional exercise, I employed in examining the letters to be signed the following day."

Lanthénas was also given a post in the department and worked very hard for his friend. Barbaroux was entreated to become Roland's secretary, and though he refused, saying he preferred "to consecrate himself to Marseilles," he helped to put some order into the Minister's affairs. Roland in his final defence took particular credit to himself for the way in which he had purged and reorganised his office. Once this work was accomplished he circularised the eighty-three Departments of

France to explain what the Revolution of the 10th of August meant to the nation, and pointed out how necessary were moderation and order in all things.

Madame Roland, whose continual desire, as we know well, was to educate the public mind, meanwhile set to work to evolve a scheme for putting every local authority in France in sympathy with the Executive. This scheme developed into the famous "*Bureau de l'Esprit publique*," and became the actual cause of her death. In connection with this scheme the Assembly voted<sup>1</sup> Roland 100,000 livres, which was to be spent on the printing of useful pamphlets. Danton inquired particularly, in one of his many talks with Madame Roland, whether Roland had any scheme for circulating these pamphlets, and specially whether he knew of any safe writers to employ. Madame Roland told him that they knew a few editors personally, and were familiar with the work of various writers in periodicals, and, moreover, that she herself had a good deal of experience of this kind owing to her connection with *La Sentinelle*. In her opinion it would be wise to ask a few authors and editors to meet informally to talk things over with them, and thus find out, through their agency, what could be done towards forming the public mind. If Danton or Fabre knew of any suitable persons she hoped they would tell her of them, and she suggested that it might be a good plan for all concerned in this venture to meet once a week at the Hôtel de l'Intérieur to discuss what the essential

<sup>1</sup> August 17.

matter to be dealt with at the moment was. Fabre then said that a scheme for a poster paper, to be called the *Compte rendu au Peuple Souverain*,<sup>1</sup> had already been submitted to Danton, and that he should suggest that his fellow-secretaries, Camille Desmoulins and Robert, might take over the running of it. Madame Roland thought this a good plan, and begged that the journalists mentioned might be sent at once to interview Roland, whose prerogative she assumed it to be to direct such an enterprise. These gentlemen did not come for their interview, but to Madame Roland's astonishment a few days later a government poster paper on the lines agreed upon began to appear. It was not a little annoying to the wife of a Cabinet Minister to have her idea of the *Sentinelle* pirated in this way, since the task of educating the public seemed to her essentially a matter for the Home Office *Bureau de l'Esprit publique*. She felt Danton had no right to interfere with what most decidedly was her husband's work. Madame Roland was extremely angry about the whole incident, and feeling she had been made a fool of, tried to revenge herself on Danton by making Roland represent to the Council that, since secret service funds had been allocated to the Executive as a whole, Danton had no right to spend a large sum of money in promoting a newspaper without consulting his colleagues. The money, it was pointed out, had been voted to the Executive power in a moment of crisis to enable it to act with celerity, and it was the collective Council

<sup>1</sup> This paper praised the Orleans massacres, September 11.

which should dispose of the funds on recommendations made by individual Ministers; for instance, Roland himself had set the right example in asking permission to spend 100,000 livres on pamphlets. Danton snapped his fingers at this rebuke and talked of "secrecy"—"great measures"—"liberty"—and his colleagues, probably rather pleased at the power which the secret allocation of funds would give them, took his part.

Danton seemed to Madame Roland always to be interfering with the work of his fellow-Ministers; for example, when the Council had discussed the advisability of sending Commissioners to the departments to explain the new situation created by the 10th of August, Roland, whose business it was to recommend suitable persons for the mission, begged to be allowed till the next day to compose his list. Whereupon Danton said, "I'll see to it; there are plenty of excellent Patriots in the Commune." The rest of the Council offered no objections, and the next day he came back with thirty commissions made out ready for signature. No one seriously opposed this high-handed action except Madame Roland, who quite rightly held acquiescence of this kind to be inexcusable in responsible Ministers; but this docility on the part of her husband's colleagues did not "surprise" her, for they were all so shockingly overworked and, one may add, so inexperienced, as to be good for very little. Details absorbed most of their energy, and hardly left their minds the elasticity necessary to deal with considerations of policy. The Council, in Madame Roland's



opinion, ought to have been purely deliberative and executive, but not administrative. Danton was the freest of them all, partly because he was the greatest of them all, and partly because he did not trouble much about the details of the work in his own Department: he left details to clerks, and signed or sanctioned or sealed the papers prepared for him in a mechanical way that left his mind free to deal with great problems, and a mind free to deal with great problems was terribly needed at this moment in France.

In his heart he probably despised the penman Roland, who was ever absorbed in the drafting of circulars and the perfecting of office routine. Danton saw clearly that the preservation of order in Paris was a far more important matter, and while Roland was busy remodelling his Bureau and writing lectures to the Provinces he sanctioned an "Extraordinary Criminal Tribunal"<sup>1</sup> to try persons concerned in "the Royalist conspiracy of the 10th of August." Numbers of arrests had been made on the 11th of August and days following, and the city sections of Paris were not at all anxious that prisoners collected in this way should be sent before the monarchic High Court of Orleans. They therefore pressed for the appointment of a new popular Tribunal, a demand that was at once acceded to by the Minister for Justice. Paris was placarded with reassuring messages anent this newly constituted Court, the "Sovereign People" was urged to suspend its vengeance, "since sleeping justice having reassumed its rights, all the guilty shall perish by the scaffold,"

<sup>1</sup> August 17.

and was urged to "let the justice of the Tribunal begin, that the justice of the people may cease."

By the 20th of August Roland was able to issue a statement to the National Assembly, in which he said he had dispatched extraordinary *courriers* to carry decrees of accusation to Dietrich of the Council General of Strasburg and to the traitor Lafayette. "I also thought it right to let citizens have copies of papers found in the cabinet of the King and Queen, and in the bureaux of the civil list; 44,000 have already been sent off. I have addressed a circular to all departments, districts and principal municipalities recalling to them the principles of liberty and equality, and pointing out the road they should follow. . . . I neglect no means of instructing the people and guarding it from error."

Madame Roland, who probably helped to compile this statement, was strongly of the opinion that, in the interests of national defence, it was necessary that Royalists capable of co-operating with the invader should be rendered powerless by imprisonment and, if necessary, by death. Of what use was it to strain every nerve to send men to the front, if another enemy were left behind ready to stab them in the back when the opportunity offered?

Every possible means of detecting Royalists was adopted; the Commune even arrogated to itself the right of opening private correspondence. It was realised by all how short the time was in which precautionary measures might be taken.

On the 19th of August Lafayette deserted at Sedan. On the same day the Prussians, including Goethe and a band of *émigrés*, amongst whom was

Chateaubriand, crossed the frontier at Rédange. The invaders gave each other rendezvous at the Palais Royal, for they entertained no apprehensions of failure. Never, as Chuquet says, was contempt of an adversary pushed further. They were as utterly confident of success as the German army that swung through Belgium in the same month in 1914. They were destined to receive at Valmy as disillusioning a shock as their compatriots of a later day on the Marne.

Brunswick was in command of 80,000 men.<sup>1</sup> Of this army the 42,000 Prussian troops it contained were haloed by the Frederician prestige, the afterglow of Rosbach. Their real inefficiency was unsuspected in Paris, just as the indecision and caution of Brunswick's character was unknown there. Every one in Paris believed the invasion to be a grave, national menace, yet imminent danger then as ever had but the effect of stimulating the immortal soul of France. The French nation in these great crises does not know the meaning of the word fear, and, as Gouvion Saint-Cyr said, "Brunswick's manifesto gave France a hundred battalions."

To oppose Brunswick 82,000 French troops<sup>2</sup> were strung out along the frontier from Dunkirk to Bâle. Dumouriez had been appointed to Lafayette's command, and it was arranged that Lückner, of the army of the Centre, a man whom Madame Roland always wished to give to the Prussians, should be superseded by Keller-

<sup>1</sup> 42,000 Prussians, 29,000 Austrians, 9000 *émigrés*.

<sup>2</sup> Exclusive of garrison troops, there were 24,000 in Flanders, 17,000 at Metz, 22,000 on the Rhine.

mann.<sup>1</sup> Danton and Servan were responsible for the conception of the Argonne campaign, and against the advice of Dumouriez ordered a stand to be made in these hills. The generals who had to carry out their orders looked upon it as rather more hopeless a situation "than that of Thermopylæ."

Just as it is interesting to note that Goethe and Chateaubriand were amongst the invaders, so it is interesting to realise that enrolled in the French army of defence were a number of young men afterwards to become famous. Amongst them were Hoche, Marceau, Davoût, Oudinot, Jourdan, Masséna, Augereau, Murat, Ney, Soult, Pichegru, Bernadotte and Lannes. The greatest of them all was not on the frontier, however, for he was busy trying to get reinstated as a captain in the army from which he had been cashiered. It was a curious little force that stood between Paris and the invaders, and it is still possible for us to catch a glint of the spirit that animated the volunteers of 1792. They welcomed Prussian bullets with shouts of "*Vive la Nation ! Vivent la liberté et l'égalité !*" Marmont, calling up in later life the memory of his splendid experience, was "bathed in a luminous atmosphere," and felt again "the fire and the energy he had known that first day."

Danton spent most of his time with Servan at the War Office, discussing plans of campaigns, concentration schemes and appointments. He says he "was quite as much an Adjutant-general as a Minister of Justice." It required

<sup>1</sup> August 25.

every moment of the six weeks that elapsed between the 10th of August and the cannonade of Valmy to put some sort of order into the chaos of army administration. Lückner had taken no steps to garrison or supply the frontier fortresses. It was impossible to defend Longwy, for example, and it capitulated, though no man of its garrison went over to the enemy, as the *émigrés* had assured the Allies they would. Verdun also was not defensible, but the commandant, Beaurepaire, blew out his brains sooner than sign the capitulation, and his soldiers marched out of the fortress before Brunswick's men crying, "We'll see you again in the plain of Champagne." Madame Roland, who still kept up her friendship with Servan and her great interest in military affairs, was secretly miserable over the advance of the Prussians, though in appearance and conversation she was most sanguine and valiant. On the 27th of August the Minister of the Interior issued an exhortation to frontier villages and towns, urging them to perish or remain free, charging them to make munitions, arms, to dig trenches, watch bridges and road junctions, make concealed defences in ditches and woods. He stated that all national resources would be utilised, and that nothing should be spared when a country has to be saved. A day or two later another Home Office circular informed the people of France that no nation pays for liberty in anything but blood. Madame Roland had found herself at last.

Paris meanwhile was calm as if nothing had happened or was about to happen. Every one seemed gay and cordial. Women and children



walked up and down the streets and gardens, fearless and happy.<sup>1</sup> The Assembly was open to every one, and all authorities for once were working in harmony. The news of the fall of Longwy reached Paris on the 26th. A Cabinet Council was at once held, an informal, unpremeditated affair, in the garden of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs.<sup>2</sup> Roland, who was very pale and upset over the surrender of Longwy, leant his head against a tree and said, "We must leave Paris." Danton asked loudly, "Where do you mean to go?" "We must go to Blois; we must take with us the King and the treasure," replied Roland. Servan and Clavières agreed that this was a necessary move. Pétion, who as usual was quite unmoved by bad news, was strongly against flight. Kersaint, who was also present, said, "I have just come from Sedan, and I know there is nothing else to be done. Brunswick will be here in Paris within the fortnight, as surely as a wedge is driven in when one strikes." Danton said, "My mother is seventy years old, and I have brought her to Paris (Arcis, his home, was on the track of the invading army). I brought my children here yesterday. If the Prussians are to come in, I hope that my family may perish with me, I hope that in one instant Paris may be burnt down with 20,000 torches." Then he turned to Roland: "Take care, Roland, and do not talk too much about flight; the people might hear you." According to Fabre, Roland trembled with anger at this remark, but said nothing.

<sup>1</sup> *Journal d'une Bourgeoise*, pp. 244-5.

<sup>2</sup> Aulard, *Études et Leçons de la Révolution Française*, vol. ii. p. 46.

That day the Executive Council deliberated with the leaders of the Assembly in the Riding School; numbers of deputies assisted at this Conference, and numbers also made themselves scarce. Servan was inclined to take a gloomy view of the military situation. He had no confidence in the army as a whole; he did not see how Kellermann could join forces with Dumouriez in the time at his disposal, or how Dumouriez himself could do much with the 23,000 men left him by Lafayette. He declared that he could see no position between Verdun and the capital which could be successfully held, and so advised a general retreat on Saumur. Then Danton spoke: "It is proposed that we shall leave Paris. You are not unaware that in the opinion of the enemy Paris represents France, and to leave this place to them is to abandon the Revolution. To go back is to lose all; we must at all costs maintain ourselves here, we must save ourselves by boldness." His auditors were spellbound. Never had any man sounded a more splendid note of courage, never had courage been more needed.

Having struck this resounding note, he went on, speaking quietly: "We must not shrink from appreciating the situation brought about by the 10th of August. It divided us into Republicans and Royalists, the first few in number, the latter numerous. We Republicans, weak in numbers, are exposed to two fires—that of the enemy from without, that of the Royalists from within. There is a Royal Committee which meets secretly in Paris and corresponds with the Prussian Army. It is impossible for Ministers to tell you where it meets

or of whom it is composed. But in order to circumvent it, to stop its disastrous foreign correspondence, it is necessary—it is necessary to make the Royalists fear.”<sup>1</sup> Everybody had been listening tensely, and the word “fear” made them shudder. “We must,” reiterated Danton, “make the Royalists fear.” No one in the Assembly spoke after this ominous utterance; all melted silently away.

Danton had been brought up on Plutarch, Livy and Cicero, like the rest of his contemporaries, and Machiavelli spoke words of wisdom when he said, “Whoever has nourished himself with the reading of ancient happenings will feel that all change of Government from a republic to a tyranny or from a tyranny to a republic must be followed and marked by some terrible blow directed against the enemies of the existing state.”

After his speech in the Assembly Danton went to the Commune: he was the man of all committees and all councils.

Measures considered essential to national defence and the preservation of order were now drawn up by the Military Committee of the Assembly and Council General of the Commune. A proclamation was issued calling for volunteers: “To arms, Citizens! To arms, the enemy is at our gates! The Procureur of the Commune announces urgent danger to our country; treason menaces us. The fortress of Verdun, now besieged by the enemy, is not in a state of defence, and before a week is up may be in the enemy’s power. To arms!”

<sup>1</sup> *Danton*, par L. Madelin, p. 160.

In order to prevent treasonable action by any inhabitant of Paris, measures of special precaution were made law :

1. All city barriers were closed.
2. All horses were commandeered.
3. All active citizens were ordered to hold themselves in readiness to march at the first signal.
4. All citizens possessing arms but too old or too ill to use them were ordered to deposit such arms at the office of their respective Sections.
5. All suspects were to be disarmed.
6. Commissioners were to be sent to inform the Army of the measures taken in the capital.
7. The Military Committee was ordered to sit permanently at the Maison Commune.
8. Guns were to be fired at stated intervals and the alarm beaten.
9. Members of the Council General of the Commune were to go to their respective Sections and there depict the horrors of the treason surrounding them, the horrors of invasion and of slavery, and to encourage men to fall with the ruins of their country, and only to give up their cities when they are a heap of ashes.<sup>1</sup>

These extraordinary measures were proclaimed on the 29th of August. At 6 p.m. the same evening all shops were shut, all doors closed. Not a pedestrian or a carriage broke the deathly silence of the streets. Boatloads of armed men

<sup>1</sup> Signed by Huguenin, President of the Council General of the Commune, and by Tallien, Secretary to same.

patrolled the Seine. The approaches to the river and the exits from the city were all guarded. At 10 p.m. every window was illuminated according to order; three hours later domiciliary visits began. Between August the 29th and 31st 3000 arrests were made.

Madame Roland wrote to Bancal of the situation, stating that she was "inaccessible to fear," and her husband "more active, and stronger than ever." Wisdom might perhaps, she thinks, have constrained the Government to leave Paris. Washington moved Congress and *he* was not actuated by fear, but now it is too late for that solution.

"Time devours me as it does itself; I mean to write to you every day; I do not find a moment. Things are going badly for us. . . . Longwy has capitulated, Thionville is blockaded, Verdun challenged; in a very short time they will all be in Prussian hands. They must arrive in Paris; I do not see what is to stop them, unless the departments rush to block their route. It is to summon these that the Assembly has issued its decree."<sup>1</sup> . . . "I will not go into all the measures we are taking; it is all very fine for us not to sleep and to display superhuman activity; it is impossible in a few hours to repair the effect of four years of treason." . . . "The enemy has stolen a march on us and we can only save ourselves by

<sup>1</sup> The decree of which she speaks was a proclamation by the National Assembly of August 26, requiring the National Guard of Paris and the neighbouring departments to furnish 30,000 armed men to reinforce Kellermann's army. The proclamation ran thus: "The fortress of Longwy has just capitulated or has been surrendered. The enemy advances; perhaps they flatter themselves that everywhere they will find none but cowards and traitors: they are mistaken. Our armies are indignant at this reverse; their courage rises. Citizens, you share their indignation; the country calls you. Go! The National Assembly requires the department of Paris and the neighbouring departments immediately to furnish 30,000 men, armed and equipped."



a kind of miracle, which we must hope for in order to make it possible. Send us armed men, such as sprang out of the earth in old days."

She adds that she is not personally afraid of the enemy, as she has measured up life and is not afraid of death; but she is "in hell for the armies of her country."

Rumours of the capitulation of Verdun reached Paris on the 1st of September. Everybody was scared, and talked of the Prussian march on Châlons, and said that it would hardly be three days before Paris would be sacked and burnt. Very silly this, as Madame Roland observed, for the "people were only thinking of the actual distance between Verdun and Paris and not of an army's slow march, encumbered by baggage and artillery." Everything was exaggerated; the air was full of rumours. Men said there were 80,000 Royalist pikes hidden away in the city, all of which would be brought out to help the enemy the day the Prussians arrived. They also said that the insurrection which was just breaking out in La Vendée was timed to co-operate with the Prussian invasion.

Meanwhile Servan worked on: four camps had been formed outside Paris, ditches and entrenchments were dug, and at least 50,000 citizens paraded the city under arms; and yet the streets and public places were tranquil enough, though the spirit of their inhabitants was rising with the approach of danger. Domiciliary visits for the seizure of arms for volunteers were being carried out by the Commune. Women were assembling in the churches to stitch at tents and clothing; bells were being melted down for cannon-balls.

Black flags drooped from the towers of Notre-Dame and the Hôtel de Ville; the sound of the alarm-gun and the tocsin were in all ears, and to add to the din trumpeters were posted at street corners ordering all citizens and National Guards to the *Champs de Mars* on Sunday, the 2nd of September.

In order to understand the tragedy of this fateful Sunday we must consider for a moment the work of the Criminal Tribunal so recently inaugurated by Danton, and also gauge the influence of Marat and his placards on the opinion of the Paris crowds. To begin with, the Criminal Tribunal was considered very lenient in operation, and it is likely that two acquittals helped to precipitate the prison massacres: on the 27th of August Dessonville, implicated in the conspiracy of Daugremont, was acquitted, and on the 31st Luce de Montmorin, Governor of Fontainebleau, one of the principal agents in promoting civil war in the country and discord in the Assembly, was also set free. This verdict was considered childish by Paris. Men said, "You discharge him to-day, and in a fortnight he will be cutting our throats." So strong was public feeling that Danton had to order a reversal of the judgment. Then there was unfortunate delay in trying Bachmann, major-general of the Swiss Guard, whose head the mob required. To his trial on the 1st and 2nd of September the people crowded, and he was duly condemned and executed. "Delayed justice" was made the excuse for horrible deeds.

Marat was greatly responsible for the so-called "vengeance of the people." Since the 10th of

August his placards had been out upon the walls; he incited the people to violence. "No quarter! your enemies will not spare you. If you do not want oceans of blood spilt you had better shed a few drops yourselves." He advised that there should be no arguing done with the enemies of a people—such enemies must be killed. On 19th August he commented on the leniency of the Criminal Tribunal, and asserted that it was evidently intended that its judgments were to be postponed until "the arrival of Lafayette and the Army of the Centre"! He recommended a visit to the Abbaye and a putting to death of the Swiss and their accomplices. What need was there of trial for such as they? "Up! Up! Citizens, let the blood of traitors begin to flow. It is the only way to save the country."

On the 25th of August Danton, in the Proclamation of the Council to the French people, had said: "You have traitors in your bosom; ah! without them the fight would soon be over." On the 28th he spoke from the tribune of the Assembly and used these words: "When a vessel is shipwrecked, the crew throw everything that might make her founder into the sea. In the same way everything that may destroy a nation should be ejected from its bosom."

But neither Danton nor Marat succeeded in rousing the people to take vengeance into their own hands, and the massacres of the 2nd of September were actually carried out by a band of murderers hired by the *Comité de Surveillance* of the Commune. On the 1st of September the public mind was attuned to ugly possibilities, for

the newspapers were full of the horrors which the Prussians were about to inflict on the innocent people of Paris, and pamphlets alleging the existence of prison plots were distributed in the streets. On the 2nd of September the prisons were very full; there were about 8000 people in them, and they were inadequately guarded since troops were wanted for other purposes, such as the rally in the *Champs de Mars*. It was quite possible that in the event of serious rioting in Paris these 8000 prisoners would manage to free themselves. The Commune discussed this possibility, and decided that it would be wise to set all debtors and civil offenders at liberty at once.<sup>1</sup> After all there was always a chance of their volunteering for the front.

The Rolands were in a particularly good position for knowing what the state of the prisons was, for they had appointed one Grandpré, whose mistress was their great friend Madame Grandchamp, to be Inspector of Prisons; indeed, they had invented this appointment partly to satisfy their own humane feelings, and partly to please Sophie.

Roland was responsible in a sense for the keeping of public peace, but since he could not employ force directly, he wrote a pressing letter to Pétion at the Commune to beg him to use what vigilance he could to safeguard order. Pétion always said that this letter reached him too late to be of use. Anyhow, he did nothing. Roland also addressed himself to the Commandant of Paris, recommending him to strengthen his

<sup>1</sup> Aulard, *Études et Leçons*, vol. ii. p. 56.



posts, and especially to watch the prisons. He did even more, he formally requisitioned troops to guard the prisons, and in order to give great effect to this requisition, to which after all his authority was limited, he printed the same and caused it to be posted at the street corners.

Grandpré, in making his round in the morning of the 2nd of September, found the occupants of the prisons in a state of panic; all sorts of rumours had penetrated to them, and many of the unfortunate suspects who had so hastily been swept out of their homes to jail were certain they were about to be massacred. After his round was over, Grandpré went to the Ministry of the Interior and waited for the Council Meeting to end. Danton came out first. Grandpré told him what he knew, and said that troops had been requisitioned by the Minister of the Interior, and then asked what action he, as Minister of Justice, would take. Danton, very impatient at being button-holed in this way, exclaimed, "I wash my hands of the prisoners. Let them be"; and went hastily on through the antechamber, sweeping past about twenty persons who were horrified at the "rough manner and words of the Minister of Justice." Louvet tells us that when the Minister got back to his office he found Brissot there, who complained of the massacres and said the innocent would suffer. "Not one, not one," said Danton. "What guarantee can you give me?" asked the editor. "I have had the lists of the prisoners sent me," said Danton, "and those whom it was convenient to set free have been scratched off." <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Madelin, *Danton*, p. 167.



The thing that strikes one most when taking stock of the proceedings of the various authorities on this tragic Sunday is their indifference to what was happening at the prisons. Every one seemed to have more important work on hand. Danton, for example, in his coat of military scarlet, attended two Cabinet Councils that day, conferred with the Comité de Surveillance at the Mairie, and addressed a great open-air meeting on the *Champs de Mars*; he also made a speech in the Riding School wherein he put forth his whole personality in an endeavour to give strength to the people of France. He said :

“ Gentlemen, it is satisfactory for the Ministers of a people who desire to be free to announce that the country will be saved. Everything is in movement, everywhere is ferment, every one longs to fight. You know that Verdun is not yet in the power of our enemies. You know that the garrison has sworn to shoot the first man that proposes surrender. Some of our people are going to the frontier, others are digging entrenchments, and others again armed with pikes are about to defend the interior of our towns. Paris will support these great efforts. The commissaries of the Commune will, in a solemn manner, invite the citizens to arm and to march in defence of the country.

“ Gentlemen, it is in this moment that you may declare the capital to have merited well of France ; it is in this moment that the National Assembly becomes a real war committee. We ask you to help us to direct this sublime movement of the people by naming commissaries who will second us in these great measures. We ask you to decree that whoever refuses to serve himself or to give up his arms shall be punished with death. We ask that some sort of instruction shall be given to the citizens in order to direct their movements. We ask

that couriers shall be sent into all the departments in order to announce the decrees that you are about to make. The tocsin that is about to ring is no signal of alarm ; it sounds the charge on the enemies of the country.

“ Gentlemen, in order to win we want boldness, more boldness, always boldness. France then will be saved.”<sup>1</sup>

Danton certainly had no time to look after the prisons on the 2nd of September, no time to give them so much as a thought. The rest of the Executive Council were almost equally busy, they all attended two Cabinet Meetings, and all were grappling with the work of their own departments as well as attending the rally in the *Champs de Mars*. The wretched prisoners seemed to be nobody's concern. The Legislative Assembly, which sat from 9 a.m. till 4.30 that day and then adjourned till 6 o'clock, was informed that prison massacres were in progress, but it paid no heed to the news, assuming that the Commune would deal with the disturbance. The Commune, which had sat during the morning, adjourned at 2 p.m. and re-assembled at 4 p.m., when it also was informed that massacres were in progress at the prisons, whereupon it passed a resolution to free civil offenders, and dispatched commissaries “to save the innocent” and to protect the Temple. At 8 p.m. the Commune sent a deputation to the Legislative Assembly, and the Assembly forthwith nominated twelve commissioners to accompany this deputation to the prisons, where they seem to have done nothing.

To realise the actual situation, we should assume that an enemy were about to land on

<sup>1</sup> Aulard, *Révolution Française*, vol. ii. p. 53.



MADAME ROLAND

*After a crayon drawing at the Château de la Rosière*



the English coast, that a committee of the County Council had decided, unknown to the Home Office, that all sympathisers with the enemy in London must be killed, as a measure of public safety. We must further assume that the Government, being far too deeply engaged with problems of defence and with the protection and preservation from panic of the civil population, has neither time nor inclination to trouble at all about the welfare of the victims. The most the Government would have done on hearing that massacres were in progress would have been to act like the Legislative Assembly and nominate Commissioners to go off and investigate the origin of the rumours, then they would have gone on with the pressing business of the hour. The fate of a few hundred enemies would not worry any Government in a supreme national crisis any more than it worried Danton, who was utterly engrossed in saving the country from invasion.

The actual signal for the butchery had been given by the *Section Poissonière*; and the slaughter began at *Les Carmes* at 2 p.m. The *Comité de Surveillance* under Marat, in order to regularise the proceedings, ordered their agents, Panis and Sergent, to see that every one was "judged." Priests and Royalists were mercilessly murdered, but owing to the resolution passed by the Commune at 4 p.m. that very day that civil offenders and debtors were to be spared, nearly 7000 out of 8000 prisoners were set free. It certainly would appear that the whole undertaking had been carefully considered and planned in advance, and that Danton was the only member



of the Government who knew what was going to happen. No one seemed surprised and no one made any serious attempt to stop the killing, which went on in a methodical way for four days. It seemed to be a matter of complete indifference to every one, and so little interest did it create in the Cabinet that Madame Roland knew nothing about the bloody business till the next day.

On looking out into the courtyard of the Ministry on Monday, the 3rd of September, Madame Roland saw about two hundred men, volunteers it seemed, who had come to ask for arms with which to go off to the frontier. She sent word that the Minister was not at home. They refused to believe this, and threatened to come up to speak to him. She again told them he was out, but to her servant's horror invited them to come up, ten at a time, to see that she spoke the truth. Ten men immediately came up. She told them that they ought to have gone to the War Office if they wanted arms; they said they had already been there, but that the Minister for War had sent them away; that all the Ministers were deceiving them; that they must have arms. She suggested that the Commune might possibly provide arms, and also informed them that Roland and Servan had gone to the Commune on their way to the Ministry of Marine, where the Council was to sit again that evening. Dissatisfied, they left, carrying off Madame Roland's butler as hostage. She watched their departure from the balcony, and then hurriedly putting on her outdoor things, jumped into a cab and drove off to the Ministry of Marine to tell Roland what had

happened. The Council had not met when she arrived ; indeed, neither Servan nor Danton had arrived ; the rest were talking in a little group, and broke off their discussion to listen to her story.

Danton was late in coming to the Council that evening. Bad news from the front had come. Verdun had fallen, and the Prussian advance guards were pushing on towards the defiles of the Argonne. He had had a terribly busy day, and had spent part of the afternoon at the Mairie in consultation with the *Comité de Surveillance*. After leaving the Committee he went up to Pétion's office, and taking him on one side, he said, "Do you know what they have settled to do down there at that Committee ? They have been foolish enough to issue a warrant of arrest against Roland—against a Minister. We cannot allow that, can we ?" . . . "The devil ! a Member of the Council ! I'll put reason into them !"

Pétion took the warrant, read it and smiled, and said, "Let it go through ; it may produce a good effect." But Danton went downstairs again and insisted on its being cancelled. The charge embodied in the warrant was one of complicity with Brunswick, a complicity which the Minister for Home Affairs was supposed to have shown in proposing to move the Government to Blois.

Madame Roland had no notion what a narrow escape her husband had had of having to appear before the Criminal Tribunal that day, or how nearly Marat had brought about her downfall. We now know that "*l'Ami du Peuple*" had intended not only to purge the prisons but also the Assembly and the Council. Brissot, Roland and

the Girondins generally were doomed. Collot d'Herbois makes no secret of it, and it was Danton who saved them from their fate.

The Council at the Ministry of Marine sat till eleven that night, and it was not till late at night that the Rolands were able to discuss the prison massacres ; when they did so, they felt every one must be implicated—the Commandant of the National Guard, the Minister for Justice, the Commune and the *Comité de Surveillance*. And as in all difficult situations they had recourse to the pen, and sat down and wrote a letter to the Assembly on the subject of the massacres.

“ Perhaps it would be better to draw a veil over yesterday's events. Though the people are terrible in their vengeance, I know that they exercise a kind of justice, and do not make every one they come across the victims of their fury. They direct their fury on those whom they believe have too long escaped the sword of the law and those whom the peril of present circumstances makes them think should be sacrificed without delay. It is easy for scoundrels and traitors to abuse these spontaneous outbursts, therefore they should be stopped. I know that we owe it to France to make a declaration that the executive power could neither foresee nor prevent these excesses. . . . Just anger, indignation carried to the *n*th inaugurate these proscriptions which fall only on the guilty, but which soon, owing to mistakes and personal passion, overwhelm even the just.

“ There is still time, but there is no moment to be lost. Let the legislators speak, let the people listen, let the reign of law be established.”

The Assembly approved of this academic justification of the Executive, and ordered that it should be printed and placarded. Moral weapons of

this sort are futile in times of violence, and naturally had no effect whatever on Marat or his agents. On the afternoon of one of these terrible days a colleague of Roland's brought Anarcharsis Cloutz, the orator of the human race, to dinner at the Ministry of the Interior. He was a Prussian and he sickened his hostess by making out that the massacres were indispensable, nay, salutary; he talked very loud, ate a great deal and bored every one terribly. Even while he was speaking the butchery was still going on quietly at the Abbaye, the Force and Bicêtre. About 1000 people were murdered systematically by a small hired corps of assassins; but no one of the three authorities in Paris interfered, all tacitly awaited the cessation of the horrors. The evenings were calm and even gay; and the Feuillant Terrace was crowded as usual.<sup>1</sup>

On the 4th of September Roland took upon himself to order Santerre, Commandant of the Garde Nationale, "in the name of the nation and by order of the National Assembly and Executive Power, to employ all forces at his disposal to prevent any violation of the security of persons and property."

Santerre immediately replied, "You reopen the wounds with which my heart is lacerated by hearing every instant of the violation of these laws and the excesses which have been committed. I have the honour to inform you that as soon as the news came that the people were *aux prises*, I gave precise orders to the commandants of battalions to form numerous patrols, and particularly to the commandant of the Temple and others in

<sup>1</sup> Aulard, *Histoire politique de la Rév. Fr.*, vol. ii. p. 70.

the neighbourhood of the King's dwelling and the Force, I specially recommended this prison to their care ; it was not then attacked.

“ I am going to redouble my efforts with the National Guard ; if it remains inert my body will serve as buckler to the first citizen they wish to insult.”

Roland sent a copy of his orders to Santerre to Pétion, begging him to second the effort. He also sent a copy to the President of Assembly with a covering letter, in which he tendered his resignation.

The personality that peeps through this letter is that of Madame Roland. It is that of a being who is unable to exist without the consciousness of acting well, who is anxious to be on the side if not of the angels at any rate of the theological virtues.

“ It now appears that the massacres carried out in the prisons were not solely the result of the transport of a people, a transport that appeared to seize citizens at sight of the dangers by which the Capital was menaced. Such a result would be instantaneous ; these cruel operations are prolonged, in spite of the requisitions I have several times addressed to the virtuous but powerless Mayor, whose voice Paris heeds not.

“ I learn that armed men are still at the Abbaye and are trying to flood the cells in which a few prisoners are still supposed to be. This morning they talked of killing the signatories to the Guillaume petition. One cannot foresee the horrors to which such a bloody move would lead us. No, it is not possible that the majority of citizens should lend themselves to these excesses. No doubt they will pull themselves together on hearing the voice of the national representatives, and disperse the mistaken men who committed them.”



This pious hope was not realised. The police did not move against the assassins employed by the *Comité de Surveillance*. Santerre did not carry out Roland's order, and the reports of the staffs of the six legions of the National Guard under his command between the 2nd and the 6th of September were, "*Rien de nouveau.*" The National Guard ignored the massacres ; like Paris itself they refused to be excited over the killing of "these accomplices of Brunswick."

It is worth noting as a proof of the prevalent indifference that in the reports of the Executive Council between the 2nd and the 7th of September there is no mention of the massacres. On the 2nd of September it is on record that the Executive Council summoned all presidents of Sections, the Procureur and three members of the Council General of the Commune to confer with them not on the subject of prisons or prisoners but on the defence of the city.<sup>1</sup>

Roland became ill with brooding over his own responsibility towards the murdered prisoners, and went down with an attack of jaundice ; it was miserable to be in power and yet powerless. Gorsas, the editor of the *Courrier*, who was sorry to see his condition, entreated him to moderate the indignation with which he was filled. This journalist, who was quite a kind man in private life, talked in his newspaper of the massacres as "an act of necessary justice." Danton contented himself with going about and saying that Roland's opposition to the massacres was the result of an ardent imagination combined with panic. In

<sup>1</sup> Aulard, *Histoire politique de la Rév. Fr.*, vol. ii. p. 66.

Danton's estimation there was nothing very much to be regretted in the disappearance of the Royalists, priests and "suspects." Indeed, it made the task of defending the city much easier.

Far from being ashamed of their bloody work, the *Comité de Surveillance* issued a circular to the departments explaining the massacres, and urging that similar measures should be taken throughout the country.<sup>1</sup>

A few days after the massacres were over Roland placarded Paris with the following pronouncement :

" I admired the 10th of August, I trembled for the consequences of 2nd September. I realised what the prolonged and deceived patience of the people and the people's justice might produce ; I did not blame the first terrible movement without consideration. I thought we ought to try and stop it, and that those who were causing it to be prolonged were deceived by their imagination and by cruel and ill-intentioned men.

" Just as a great storm purifies the air and sweeps away the refuse of our capitals, thus do anger and popular movements work in a few hours those things that the course of time might perhaps bring about ; but just as a prolonged storm ravages the country and destroys the harvest of several years, so the continued movements of the people are inimical to their own interests, and bring about an anarchy in which one may seek vainly the confused elements of justice and happiness."

This fatuous production was a mere confession of helplessness—a condonation inspired by weakness. We can hardly feel that Madame Roland had a say in its composition. It seems more like the lucubration of a weak and frightened man than the indignant protest of a fearless woman.

<sup>1</sup> Buchez et Roux, *Histoire parlementaire*, tome xvii. p. 432.

## CHAPTER XIV

### WAR AND PROPAGANDA

"Les idées ne se tuent pas à coup de bâton."—LOISY.

IT was only by degrees that the details of the September massacres became known at the Home Office. No words could express Madame Roland's horror when she knew what had really happened. The assassins employed by the Commune had apparently revelled in their work, had violated women before tearing them to ribbons, and had eaten quivering human flesh. When she knew that in spite of her husband's requisition for adequate guards for the prisons there had only been two men on duty at the Abbaye on the 2nd of September, and that fifty resolute soldiers might have prevented the massacres altogether, she felt physically sick with anguish: it was more than she could bear. Pétion told her that the plot to slaughter the prisoners might easily have been foiled—but, as he admitted seven weeks later in the Convention, "it is true that several public men, several defenders of the country, believed these days to be necessary." The realisation of the massacres seemed to change Madame Roland's whole outlook on life—she began to despair of humanity; it was her first glimpse into the abyss of human depravity, and as a disciple

of Rousseau she blanched at the sight. Above all, the horror of those September days made her abominate Danton, whom she believed to be in collusion with the *Comité de Surveillance*, which had planned the atrocity; and when she learned that the Government circular to the departments explaining and to some extent justifying the murder of prisoners had Danton's seal appended to it<sup>1</sup> her anger knew no bounds.

Soon, to add to her wretchedness, other massacres took place at Rennes, Meaux, Lyons and Versailles. The murders at Versailles affected her deeply, as her husband was to some extent implicated. In consequence of the formal request by the Commune that prisoners awaiting trial at Orleans should be brought to Paris for judgment, the Assembly had given instructions for their transfer to Saumur. By order of the Minister of the Interior an escort of 1000 men was provided for them under command of Fournier, "the American." These men refused to take the prisoners to Saumur, and set out with them on the Paris road. To avert further disorder, Roland sent off a dispatch to Fournier, ordering him to take the prisoners to Versailles. When the carriages conveying these ill-fated beings arrived at Versailles, Alquier, a local magistrate, rushed off to Danton in Paris and told him that the prisoners were exposed to great danger. Danton is supposed to have answered: "What's that to you? The affairs of those people are nothing to do with you. Do your own work and don't mix yourself

<sup>1</sup> Affixed by his secretary, Fabre d'Eglantine, with or without his knowledge.

up with other things." "But the law ordains that I should look after the safety of prisoners," said the Magistrate. "What does that matter?" again said the Minister, marching up and down. "There are very guilty persons among them; one does not know how the people will regard them and to what lengths their imagination may not go," and he turned his back on Alquier.<sup>1</sup> The prisoners were murdered on the evening of the 9th of September. What brought the whole affair home to Madame Roland was to realise that poor De Lessart, their ex-colleague, was among the dead. It has been said that when Fournier came to Paris to give an account of his work, Danton shook him by the hand, saying, "It is not the Minister of Justice, it is the Minister of the Revolution who congratulates you." Whether this is a true saying or not, it is on record that Fournier and his men were well paid for their "services."<sup>2</sup>

The Versailles massacre was a dreadful blow to both the Minister of the Interior and his wife, for it made them feel how utterly powerless they were to influence, much less to control, the Revolution. To them law and order seemed to be a thing of the past. Writing to Bancal, Madame Roland at this time says: "My friend Dton arranges everything; Robp is his tool; Ma<sup>t</sup> holds his torch and dagger; this grim tyrant rules for the present; we ourselves are merely oppressed, but we expect to be victims." She felt ashamed to be in office, ashamed that Roland should be member of a Government powerless to prevent such wickedness, and she urged him to seek election to the Convention which, if his

<sup>1</sup> *Danton*, Madelin, p. 171.

<sup>2</sup> *Archives*, Dossier of the Affair.



candidature were successful, would automatically relieve him of the burden of office. Brissot was very angry with her for this, as he felt the Gironde could not spare its "ablest" as well as its "most fearless" Minister. He expressed a hope that Danton might be elected to the Convention, thereby ridding the Cabinet of his malignant presence; and this, he assured Madame Roland, would give her husband a free hand in administration.

Meanwhile, in order to occupy her mind with other subjects, she helped Roland to write circulars to the inhabitants of country districts, instructing them to organise for defence and prevent corn falling into enemy hands, and telling how it can be transported to the interior of France. She was extremely busy, and got through an immense amount of work.

It is a relief to turn from the uncondonable and disgusting outrages of those early September days to appreciate the patriotism displayed by the mass of the French people at this time. On the very day that the massacres began, Vergniaud, who ably seconded Danton in the great work of organizing National Defence, earnestly entreated all citizens to help dig trenches round Paris, urging them to display the same zeal that they had shown in preparing for the Feast of Federation in 1790. He said: "You have hymned Liberty, now you must defend it. It is no longer time for speech-making, but for work in the trenches." Vergniaud had the gift of awakening enthusiasm in his hearers, and the results of enthusiasm, once it was awakened, were very remarkable.

Strange scenes of devotion were witnessed in the Riding School during those hot September days. A few examples, taken at random, give one more idea of the spirit of the people than pages of description would do. Mademoiselle Montansier, an actor-manager, came to the bar of the Assembly to get her actors, artists, dancers and scene-shifters freed from their contracts in order that they might offer themselves as a company of eighty-five (fifteen of whom have arms) for the frontier. "Pupils in surgery" came to present their talents and their services to their country, "bringing 2600 livres with them." Rich women came and offered to adopt the children of volunteers. Ladies surrendered their only sons for the army. The four brothers Duquerci presented themselves for enlistment in the same squadron of cavalry. A citizen offered his five sons for the frontier.

By the 4th of September it was found impossible to let all volunteers file through the Riding School—there were too many, some of them had to be diverted to the Commune, but still they came and came. Great numbers of National Guards before starting for the frontier marched past the House, swearing to defend the principles of Liberty and Equality till death. Citizenesses offered to form "a legion of women from twenty-four to forty years old, organised in small platoons." A band of sculptors and artists followed these ladies—"young artists who had heard the trumpet of war." These youths solemnly assured the Assembly that when they came back to their firesides they intended to "reanimate in marble and on canvas the splendid actions of which they

would have shared the glory, and that they would endeavour to immortalise the memory of this war—the War of Liberty.”

Women gave up their husbands, lovers, brothers, sons with a courage unmatched till to-day. The German invasion provoked a spirit of self-sacrifice and a disregard of danger which has never been surpassed though it has been equalled again and again. Villages with but a hundred men in them capable of marching supplied fifty-five armed volunteers, equipped and provisioned by their community. The *garçons perruquiers* gave money; an anonymous lady 1200 livres; a citizen a fine horse; the teachers of the deaf mutes 200 livres. A gun and its bayonet, jewels, diamond buckles, a gold snuff-box, a pair of epaulettes, a sword, were among the things heaped on the Secretaries' table in the Assembly. Madame Villamine brought “a gold cross, a gold heart, a moss agate mounted as a ring, a gold ring, a pair of gold ear-rings, a silver thimble and eighteen livres in silver, watches, medals, a gold apple, a pair of pistols.”

Workmen brought their savings, servants their wages, schoolgirls their pocket-money. A poor old bedridden woman sent a gold cross; a surgeon of eighty, four splints, as “he was too old and too poor to contribute anything further.” Actors brought money, a judge his pension for two years. Brunswick had evoked the spectre of a Nation at War, before the aspect of which allied kings were to tremble.

Poor Madame Roland was so obsessed with the horror of the September massacres that she could hardly take any interest in promoting patriotism

or in working for National Defence. The memory of the murders hung like a thunder-cloud across her horizon, her mind was haunted by gloomy forebodings and fears. The demands made on her time and capacity caused her, however, after two or three weeks' misery, to try and forget the past in devoting herself to the future.

The political power and reputation of the Assembly had sunk to zero by this time, for it had become no more than a machine for registering Communal decisions. On the 20th of September, the day of Valmy, after an existence of eleven months, it came to an end. While the soaked soldiers of Kellermann were clambering up the western slopes of the Argonne, and Kellermann himself was standing by the mill at Valmy shouting "*Vive la Nation!*" his hat with its tricolour cockade on his sword-point, the Legislative Assembly, which had made the war, faded out of existence.

The elections for the new Assembly were complete before the old Assembly was dissolved; as a point of fact, the day of Valmy marked not only the death of the Legislative Assembly but the birth of the Convention.

About one-tenth of the electors of France had recorded their votes for candidates for the new parliament, and the elections, in so far as they proved anything at all, proved that there was no conflict of opinion in the provinces. The majority of the country deputies had been elected on no programme; they had been vaguely instructed to vote for the protection of property and the suspension of the King. They were conservative compared with Paris, and really seemed to live between



two fears: the fear of a counter-revolution accompanied by reprisals, and the fear of a social revolution accompanied by dispossession. Unlike the deputies to the Constituent and Legislative Assemblies, they were not men of theories and ideas, but rank opportunists, realists guided only by circumstances. At least the Girondins, though feeble men, had the courage of their opinions till the end; but then they *had* opinions and stood for principles, whereas the majority of the members of the Convention had neither the one nor the other. In contrast to the country members, the Paris members were revolutionary in programme and sentiment. Girondins had little chance of election in the capital. For example, Condorcet was rejected by Paris, but nominated for election in five departments. Roland, who would have stood no chance in Paris, was returned by a country constituency. Pétion, the Mayor, it is true, was elected by Parisians, but, though once adored by the mob, he was now suspected of "Brissotinism," and was only returned to the Convention by a bare majority in the city, whereas the *Septembriseurs*, Tallien and Panis, as well as Marat, Collot, Billaud and d'Orléans, were supported enthusiastically in Paris.

The first meeting of the Convention, a private one, was held on 20th September,<sup>1</sup> and although only 371 out of its 750 deputies had arrived in Paris the Gironde seemed to have everything its own way. Pétion was elected President (by 235 out of 371 voices), and it emphasised the gulf that yawned between Girondins and the new patriots to know

<sup>1</sup> Salle des Cent Suisses, Tuileries.



that Robespierre only received six votes when put up for this office, and Danton even less. All the six secretaries of the Convention were Girondins, and they included Brissot, Vergniaud and Condorcet. On the 21st of September Bishop Grégoire moved that since "all dynasties are a race of devourers living on human flesh the abolition of Royalty should forthwith be consecrated by a solemn enactment." Within an hour the Convention decreed the abolition of Monarchy in France.

Madame Roland began to think that her fears as to the future were premature or even unfounded, that there might after all be some hope for the triumph of Liberalism, even though the Gironde—the word had now become usual—sat on the Right, the fatal Right,<sup>1</sup> which in each succeeding Assembly was doomed to extinction. When the Convention was complete it consisted of a Centre party known as the Marais, a Left known as the Montagne and a Right known as the Gironde. Amongst the deputies were 192 members of the Legislative Assembly, 77 of the Constituent Assembly and 30 newspaper editors. The Right was the declared enemy of the Commune, and through the Commune of Paris, the bloody city which had given it power. The desire of the Gironde, a desire for which Madame Roland was greatly responsible, was to reduce Paris, which the Mountain said had made the Revolution, to "its proper place as an eighty-third part of France."

Nothing better illustrates the line of cleavage between Gironde and Mountain than a speech

<sup>1</sup> Left of the President since January 6, 1792.

made by Isnard,<sup>1</sup> in which he declared himself against a Parisian dictatorship over France :

“ I declare here plainly that I shall vote for all the departments to co-operate in guarding the legislative body. I fear the despotism of Paris, and I have no desire that those who dispose of the opinions of men there and mislead them, should dominate the National Convention of France herself. I have no desire that Paris, under the guidance of intriguers, should become to the French Empire what Rome was to the Roman Empire. Paris must be reduced to an eighty-third influence equal to the other departments ; never will I bend beneath its yoke ; never will I consent that it should tyrannise over the Republic, as some intriguers wish, against whom I dare to be the first to rise, because I will never be silent before any kind of tyrant.”

This speech sums up the policy of the Gironde in home affairs, and it was with home affairs that the Rolands were mainly concerned. Buzot condensed the sentiment of the Gironde with regard to centralised government in a memorable aphorism : “ Centralisation is certainly a method of Government, but complete centralisation spells monarchy or despotism.”

Madame Roland and her party believed that France as a whole was entirely out of sympathy with the new and brutal methods of government inaugurated by the Commune in Paris and supposed that they were carrying out the general sense of the country in endeavouring to counter and annul the threatened Parisian despotism. Paris, directly it became personified for Madame Roland in its representatives, began to loom in her mind as the enemy of good government—

<sup>1</sup> September 25 at Jacobin Club.

Paris, with its bloody unprincipled Commune, its domiciliary visits, its band of hired assassins, its undependable and possibly corrupt National Guard. Already we see fermenting in her brain the germ of the plan of setting the departments against Paris for which the Girondins had afterwards to die. Writing to Bancal, with the memory of the massacres vividly in her mind, she said that the Assembly and the Council were lost beyond hope if they were not at once furnished with a Departmental Guard. She urged him to work immediately to organise one, so that under the pretext of fighting external enemies (to meet whom the best Parisians were being dispatched to the frontier) he may inspire France itself to come to the rescue of the upholders of order.

After all, as Madame Roland realised, the only serious question at issue in the Convention was not the form of government, for all were more or less republican by now, but the spirit of government. In other words, Was Paris to exercise a dictatorship over France, or was France in a liberal and quiet way to set out to govern itself?

In times of revolution events move so quickly that in order to influence their course decisions have to be taken even more quickly, and Madame Roland took a decision at this time—a fatal one for her party as it turned out—to fight Paris to the end. She was convinced that unless steps were taken by the Girondin party to have at its disposal an armed force in the shape of a Departmental or Territorial Guard it would never be in a position to enforce any law of which the Mountain or Commune disapproved.

Since the 2nd of September it had become obvious to her that the National Guard was no longer at the disposal of the Executive. Its character, she thought, must have changed when its form was changed on the 10th of August. On that day the sixty Parisian battalions of the National Guard had been transformed into the forty-eight armed sections of Paris, corresponding to the forty-eight wards of the city. Each section was possessed of two pieces of artillery, and each section had developed a tendency to act independently according to its sympathies and not according to orders, and on the whole the sympathies of the sections lay with the Commune and the Mountain. The Government having no armed force in the capital on which it could depend in an emergency, was, as Madame Roland realised, in an exceedingly weak position in spite of its numerical superiority in the House. Votes, as she sadly reflected, might become pious expressions of opinion if there was nothing behind them. What on earth was the good of a party that could make decisions but had no power of carrying them out ?

The weakness of the French Government's position was, as Madame Roland told her husband, enhanced by the apparent solidarity of the Commune—no Girondin was in it save Pétion, and he carried no weight whatever. Marat dominated the Commune, Danton dominated the Executive and Robespierre led the Mountain. They were a strong trio, as Madame Roland realised when she contrasted them with Vergniaud and Brissot, the Girondin leaders in the Assembly, with her own husband, the principal Girondin in the Govern-



ROBESPIERRE

*From a drawing in the Cabinet de Boze, Versailles*





ment, and with Pétion, the solitary Girondin of the Commune. Ability perhaps might be equally shared by all, but it was evident to any one that power, determination and force of character were more obvious in the one set of leaders than the other.

In order to ensure good government and to avoid a recurrence of massacres and riots, it seemed absolutely necessary to summon a Territorial Guard from the departments to Paris. To Madame Roland this measure seemed by far the most important and the most immediate necessity of the new administration. To bring it about she spent all her strength, her influence, her eloquence. No stone was left unturned by her in her effort to put her party out of reach of a *coup d'état* by the Commune.

On the 23rd of September Roland made a report on "the State of France" in the Assembly. He gave a miserable account of the country, and urged that the Government of a free State should be vigorous and should show initiative in reconstruction. Out of heart and sad he wrote to his wife, who for the moment was out of Paris: "My friend, I send you things which I have written in the midst of trouble and agitation . . . but which I am convinced must be said. It is only by great display of character and much strength that we shall be able to resist. If we become irresolute all is lost, if we perish we must perish with glory, and our fall must save '*la chose publique*'—a thing that cannot be done unless I expose the true state of affairs and the danger in which we now are. . . . I think you ought to come home

to-night; but in the meantime read what I send you, and then give orders for the carriage.”<sup>1</sup> In spite of the motto he admired and had adopted, “*Bien faire et laisser dire*,” Roland entered the polemical arena on the slightest provocation. Sometimes he felt obliged to defend his integrity, sometimes to stress his courage, sometimes to draw attention to the fact that he consecrates “but four hours to sleep.” Sometimes he alludes to the innumerable letters he has answered, sometimes to the zeal shown in his department. But, in spite of all the application and the zeal, he felt his power to be of the slenderest kind.

Every day Madame Roland became surer that it was more honest as well as more honourable to represent one's country as a deputy than to remain as member of a passive Council and of a Government which did not govern, and on hearing that the department of the Somme had nominated the Minister of the Interior as its representative she was delighted, for it gave them a chance of escaping from office without condemning them to obscurity. The Brissotins were angry with her for trying to persuade Roland to resign his portfolio. They all said he was irreplaceable in office, and that any fool could vote and speak in the Assembly. But notwithstanding their disapproval, Roland resigned office on the 25th of September, designating obsequious, indispensable Pache as his successor. In his opinion “one citizen alone could fill the difficult post of Minister of the Interior, and that was venerable Pache, the new Abdolonymous. Modest, wise, the enemy of all show, he is appre-

<sup>1</sup> *Mémoires de Pétion, Buzot et Barbaroux*, p. lxxvi.

ciated by those who know him and full of devotion to the public concern.”<sup>1</sup>

Danton, to Madame Roland's disgust, did not immediately follow Roland's honourable example. He still, as she expressed it, “clung to office.” She therefore instructed Louvet to attack him in *La Sentinelle*, which she seemed to forget was a Government paper financed from the public funds, and not the organ of her private opinions and rancour. On the 29th of September, Ministers elected deputies were once more given their chance by the Assembly of remaining in the Government. Danton, infuriated by Madame Roland's interference in ministerial affairs, rose and sarcastically said, “No one is more fair to Roland than I am, but I do say that if you invite him to be Minister, you should also extend the invitation to Madame Roland, for every one knows that he is not alone in his department. As for me, I am alone in mine.” Something, possibly the pressure of the Gironde, probably the fact that his election was found to be invalid, forced Roland to rescind his resignation, and on the 1st of October a letter appeared in the *Moniteur* in which he stated that he had decided to remain at his post because it was dangerous, and that he feared nothing so long as it was a question of serving his country. Other citizens as suitable might be forthcoming, but he explained that since he had been called by public confidence to the post, he felt himself enthralled by this confidence, and must prove himself worthy of it.

It was not a little flattering to both the Rolands to receive the crowd of deputies who

<sup>1</sup> *Moniteur*, Letter of Resignation, September 29.

came flocking to their house to beg the Home Secretary to remain in office, and to assure him that it was a sacrifice he owed to his country. There is no one of us so detached but that we like being made to feel important and indispensable. The Girondins specially urged him not to despair so soon of reducing chaos to order; they felt that wonders could be worked directly the Convention had really begun to run the country and directly Danton could be eliminated from the Cabinet. And so with a kind of cold despair the Rolands once more took up office, and faced the growing enmity of the people of Paris and the disgusting and daily calumnies of Marat in *l'Ami du Peuple*.

On the 31st of September, to Madame Roland's extreme delight, Danton resigned office, but he continued to dominate the Council till the 11th of October. As a protest Roland attended no Council meetings between these two dates, a decision he lived to regret. On the 11th of October Garat, a man chosen by Buzot and Madame Roland to "strengthen and purify" the Girondin Cabinet, took over the seals of office as Minister of Justice. There was another post vacant, for Servan had resigned his portfolio as Minister for War on the 3rd of October, preferring to command an army at the front to battling for control of an unmanageable department. The Rolands succeeded in jobbing Pache into Servan's place, and so certain were they both that Pache would refuse the post that, according to Buzot, they sent him letter after letter beseeching him to accept the responsibility, as it was of the greatest



importance to the country to secure his services. Both Garat and Pache were soon to prove themselves sad disappointments to their guileless nominators, but Madame Roland had no inkling at the moment of their true characters or views, and preened herself not a little on the composition of the homogeneous Cabinet. So pleased was she that she hardly paid any attention to the ominous fact that Danton, on resigning office, had become President of the Jacobin Club, and that as a more or less direct consequence of this, Roland, Louvet and other moderates had been squeezed out of this association. If she had given any thought to the matter she must have noticed that a powerful organisation, which was not only always ahead of the Government of the day but which prided itself on its power of formulating opinion throughout the country, did not spew forth moderate Liberals from its Councils without good reason. Had she but realised it, it was the death-knell of her party and its hopes.

But in spite of such warnings, Madame Roland as she reviewed her men and her weapons in those October days, was not ill-satisfied with her position. Marat's scurrilous and constant abuse was of course hard to bear with, but given time, ways might be found of dealing with him. After all, she could still control *La Sentinelle*, she could still direct the "*Bureau de Correspondance*," which she fondly believed would countermine all Jacobin effort on the same lines, and she was in a fair way to getting her idea of a strong Departmental Guard realised. Then she had her political friends, the men whom she controlled in the

House who were willing to lend themselves to her purposes. First amongst them was Buzot, deputy for Evreux, who Madame Roland loved to think was, like herself, a disciple of Plutarch and Rousseau, but, unlike herself, a melancholy romantic. Perhaps his temperament is to be most easily gauged in a few phrases that occur in his memoirs: "What will remain of us for the historians? Nothing perhaps save the useless remembrance of our sterile virtues and some scraps of our writings." . . . "Weak men are more to be feared in times of revolution than wicked men—they lose all by cowardice." When writing to his supporters at Evreux he talked of himself as "*plongé dans la fange de cette ville corrompue.*" He and Madame Roland were at one in their opinions of their colleagues. He loathed Danton, whom he thought a coarse brute, though he had to concede to him a certain force of mind and character and eloquence of the popular kind. He hated Marat, and agreed with Condorcet that the people's idol had neither an idea in his head nor a feeling in his heart. He held Monge to be an imbecile, Servan a wise, active soldier and a good patriot, and Clavières a good financier. Roland, because of his "rigid virtue," was of course worthy of the best age of the Roman Republic. Buzot and Madame Roland became extremely intimate, they had so much in common, and it was Buzot whom Madame Roland chose to propose in the Convention that a Departmental Guard should forthwith be provided for the Assembly.<sup>1</sup> Louvet and Barbaroux were also

<sup>1</sup> October 9 and 19.

her willing spokesmen, and were used freely by her that autumn in her attack on Paris. But Buzot held a higher place than they; though not so clever as the author of *Faublas* nor so heroic as Barbaroux, he had begun to dominate Madame Roland's heart. All the sterile years with Roland seemed more arid and more dreary than ever. Roland's cold, meaningless and watching eyes became more and more irritating to her as she dreamt of the burning depths of passion revealed in Buzot's gaze; unknown to herself, she was falling in love.

While Roland was working at the "Report on the State of Paris" which he had been requested to furnish to the Assembly, Madame Roland busied herself with indoctrinating the departments with a kind of moderate, federal republicanism. Like Buzot, she believed that a republic was only possible in France under a form approximating to that of the Government of America, and only then "if one assumed the French to have moral qualities in which they are lacking." Endless circulars and pamphlets "in the Girondin sense" were distributed, and most of the secret service money allocated to Roland by the Assembly on the 18th of August was spent by Madame Roland in this way. She worked extremely hard to influence and guide opinion in the country: opinion, as she was always saying, was the only basis of government. It is difficult to know which pamphlets were actually written by her. She says they were numerous, and all were issued over her husband's name. There is one circular addressed to the clergy of France which quite obviously is hers and hers

only. She begs them to cease invoking the Eternal on behalf of kings, to chant "*Domine salvum fac regem*" no more. French, it is suggested, should be substituted for Latin, and priests are adjured to co-operate with the Government. "Ministers of the gospel, your mission is sublime if you amalgamate it in some way with that of your tireless legislators, with that of the Executive Power."

Branches of the "*Bureau de Correspondance*" had been organised in each department; they served as nuclei for the collection of information and the dissemination of doctrine. An ever-increasing volume of intercourse was maintained by the Central Bureau with branch offices and even with individuals. Lanthénas, who had had a good deal of secretarial experience at the Jacobin Club, as well as Champagneux, Le Tellier and Madame Roland, worked all day at the Bureau. It really never attained much influence, as the more powerful and perhaps more ably directed Jacobin organisation eclipsed it in the provinces. Madame Roland tells us that the circulars and letters she sent out "breathed the spirit of fraternity," and were "illuminated by a charming kindness and affection" calculated to win all hearts, but oddly enough they contained nothing one could lay hold of—no policy, in short. Here is a typical pæan leading to nothing in particular: "Liberty has become the universal rallying-point; Kings trembling on their thrones are obliged to regard it with their favour in order to avoid overthrow." However, for a while it all seemed to her a great success, and according to her own account,



“administrative bodies because of it worked more smoothly,” “five or six hundred local societies were affiliated to it,” “as well as many individual priests and business men.” She adds that it was “a marvellous monument of patriotism, principle and vigilance,” but all the same it was destined to lead its promoters into terrible trouble. The pamphlets were not universally appreciated, as when a letter of apology was sent to Arras for not having sent literature to the town for some time. Arras replied that they were glad that pamphlets had ceased to rain upon them, as they viewed “the envenomed aliment” with horror. At one time Madame Roland made an appeal through the Bureau to the departments for protection against “illegality,” and some southern and western departments offered to come and defend the national representatives against “the Monster,” as Paris was commonly designated. Marat was determined to put an end to Madame Roland’s activities, and attacked the Minister of the Interior pitilessly for perverting the public mind with his “*Bureau de Correspondance*.” Owing to his ingenuity and persistence this accusation assumed very formidable proportions as time went on.

Politically one great advantage was in the hands of the Gironde, but it was an advantage of which they made no use. At this time Dantonists, Robespierrists and Maratists hated each other, but the Gironde, instead of attacking them in detail, attacked them all together and indiscriminately, and as it were created a formidable opposition for themselves. For in-



stance, they attacked Marat<sup>1</sup> in the *Sentinelle*; then without defeating him, they attacked Danton,<sup>2</sup> first through his financial accounts and second on the score of the September massacres; and then, without disposing of Danton, they attacked Robespierre.<sup>3</sup>

It was bad generalship, and a good deal of it may be put down to Madame Roland, whose ordinarily clear mind was obscured by personal loathing of individuals. So long as the Prussian invasion hung over their heads, there might, she felt, have been some slight excuse and reason for a military dictatorship, or even for the prison massacres; but once this nightmare had been dispelled at Valmy, once it was known that the Prussians were in retreat, there was no earthly reason to her mind for *not* governing according to sound liberal principles and established order. There was no reason, for example, to request the provinces to follow the bloody example of the capital. People like Danton "tore the very heart out of good government"; nothing could really be done till he had been got out of the way, together with the brutes who thought as he thought. The pity was that in deciding to fight Danton to the end she decided to use weapons of invective and personal rancour. On assuming office the Minister of Justice had said to his secretary, "You write too much. In times of revolution one does not write, one acts." Madame Roland wrote too much, and so did her husband: it was impossible to vanquish Danton with a pen.

Three weeks after the battle of Valmy Madame

<sup>1</sup> October 6.

<sup>2</sup> October 18.

<sup>3</sup> October 29.

Roland's old enemy, Dumouriez, appeared in Paris. He made the most of his stay there, appearing as frequently as possible in public, making speeches at the Clubs to the effect that before a month was out he would be marching at the head of 60,000 men "to fight Kings and to emancipate Peoples." He was greeted as a victorious general everywhere—at the Opera, at the Jacobin Club, in the streets, in the Assembly. Of course he had to dine at the Hôtel de l'Intérieur, and arrived there with a beautiful bouquet for his hostess. He was in great spirits and proposed that they should go on to the Opera after dinner; she felt disinclined to appear there in his company, so waited till he had gone and then turned to Vergniaud and suggested he should go with her and her daughter to the Ministerial box. Vergniaud accepted and they drove off. The woman who opened the doors of the Opera House told them the Minister of the Interior was already in his box. Madame Roland said that was quite impossible, and requested to be conducted to her usual seats. Four men standing in the passage assured her the Ministerial box was full. The woman, however, opened it, and Danton, Dumouriez and two or three women of the town were disclosed to Manon's indignant gaze. They did not see her, and she shut the door unobserved and went home.

One of the many people who gave a party in the General's honour was Julie Talma. Hers was a house to which Madame Roland only went to occasionally, though most of the Girondins frequented it. On the particular evening on which Dumouriez was the guest of honour, Vergniaud,

Brissot, Madame Vestris and Mademoiselle Candaille were all there, the last named at the piano. Suddenly a noise was heard on the stairs, and Marat burst in. He was dressed in a "carmagnole"; his sockless feet were encased in dirty boots; a red Madras kerchief was bound round his head; filthy greasy hair stuck out underneath it: his twitching grin made the women's blood run cold. He was accompanied by Dubuisson, Pereyra and Proly, members of the "*Comité de Sureté Générale*." "Citizen," he bawled at Dumouriez, "a deputation of friends of Liberty went to the War Office to communicate to you dispatches that concerned you. They went to your house, you were not to be found. We did not expect to find you in a house like this, in the midst of a crowd of concubines and counter-revolutionaries." Talma walked towards him with flashing eyes. "Citizen Marat," he said, "by what right do you come to my house to insult our wives and our sisters?" Instead of wringing Marat's neck, Dumouriez mildly asked, "May I not rest from the fatigues of war in the midst of the arts and my friends without having them outraged by indecent epithets?" "This house is the hearth of counter-revolution," Marat shouted, and then left, threatening horrible things. All the guests were certain they would be immediately denounced to the *Comité*. One, however, recovered sufficiently from the shock of Marat's appearance to run round with scent to purify the air after "the dirty beast's visit."

The next day *l'Ami du Peuple* hawkers cried, "Great conspiracy discovered by Citizen Marat,

the friend of the people. Great gathering of Girondins and counter-revolutionaries at Talma's house."

Marat was busy in a hundred ways in making and then widening the breach between the "new aristocrats" or Girondins and the People, whose champion he professed to be. It was not by his clothes alone that he proclaimed himself the brother of the outcast and the beggar, it was by the jargon in which his paper was written, by his attacks on privilege wherever it existed.

Madame Roland found it difficult to attack so crapulous and secretive a creature as Marat. As far as she could make out he lived in a cellar, and hardly emerged into the light of day except to deliver some speech at the "*Comité de Sureté Générale*"; the rest of the time he was busy writing and interviewing the dregs of the populace. Fabre d'Eglantine, another person she loathed, was also difficult to attack, and although she was quite unjustly convinced that he had robbed the "*Garde-Meuble*" and stolen the Crown jewels, she could not see any way of getting at him. Danton was, in a sense, far easier game, and, since she had no doubt that he was financially dishonest, and continually was hearing tales about the bribes he accepted, she organised an attack on him on this score through her friends. It took the form of requesting him to produce his statement of public moneys spent. Madame Roland had told all her friends that it was common knowledge that Danton had kept no accounts. On the 18th of October Roland presented his own accounts to the Assembly; they were meticulously kept,



and his well-primed supporters at once asked that those of Danton and other Ministers should also be produced. When directly challenged in this way, Danton said there was no mystery about the expenditure for which he was responsible, and he hoped that all details of his administration might be given the full light of day. Rebecqui asked that all Ministers should show their accounts, and Danton said he had spent nothing save by order of the Council, though the Legislative Assembly, on the taking of Verdun, had told him to spend anything so long as he restored confidence, but that, in spite of having been given a free hand, he had already rendered his accounts to the Cabinet. Roland had not been present at the particular Council meeting referred to by Danton; indeed it was one of those from which he had absented himself on principle. Cambon said Roland ought to have been present at it and then he would have known all there was to know. Roland then said he had certainly not attended any Council at which any accounts had been rendered, that he had looked up the report of the meeting referred to and had found no reference on the register to proceedings of the kind mentioned. Danton in reply said, "I beg to observe that no statement of secret expenditure ever appears in the proceedings of the Council." He had the best of the encounter, as was usual whenever any one dared to cross swords with him. By the 7th of November the Convention was informed that members of the Executive had rendered account of all secret and other expenditure. Madame Roland's attack had been met and foiled.



Rather annoyed but in no wise discouraged, she tried another attack on the great man on the occasion of the presentation of Roland's "Report on the State of Paris" to the Convention.<sup>1</sup> A good many unpleasant matters were dealt with in it, and the tone was too vindictive as well as too honest to please any one except his immediate friends. Being afraid that if he read the Report himself his naturally weak voice would not be heard, he got Lanjuinais to do it for him. It was really a courageous and frank attack upon the Commune which he alleged "had seized all powers and had not exercised them with justice." Amongst other matters he spoke of dilapidations at the Tuileries and other public buildings, the burglary of the "*Garde-Meuble*" and Crown diamonds, the robbery of prisoners, the annexation by the Commune of many millions of livres. All these matters would have to be cleared up and accounted for. He stated, and his remarks were punctuated by applause, that the Commune had worked up the sections of the city to independent action, and that they were no longer susceptible of control by the central authority. It had committed numerous irregular and reprehensible acts, and none more dangerous or foolish than the indoctrination of the mob with the idea that they were the Sovereign People. Anarchy reigned in Paris; public and private property were no longer respected; watches, ear-rings and chains were openly snatched in the streets; lives were no longer safe; and it was all the work of the men who had organised and paid for the September massacres—"those

<sup>1</sup> October 29, in response to an order of the Convention of 26th.

false friends of the people who, hiding their extravagance and villainy under the mask of patriotism, conceived the plan of an upheaval in which they hope to raise themselves on ruins and corpses to power.”<sup>1</sup> It was a vigorous, brave attack, and Madame Roland was glad to think that he had not hesitated to accuse the ex-Minister for Justice of complicity in the September massacres. Danton did not attempt to excuse himself from the accusation, but merely said, “Never has a throne been cast down without in its fall wounding a few good citizens.” Eloquent and brutal, he seemed “to beat his enemies into silence.” Roland went on to say that there were “some who recommended more blood-letting,” and as he spoke these words the men of the Gironde fixed their eyes on Robespierre. Jumping up, he called Roland’s report “a defamatory romance,” and said that it should not be published until all those whom it incriminated had been heard in their own defence. He challenged the Girondins to produce a single positive proof of his wish to let more blood—to accuse him to his face of such a thing! Louvet, trembling with fury, rushed to the Tribune. “It is I, Robespierre, who accuse you of having long calumniated the purest patriots. . . . I accuse you of setting yourself up as an object of idolatry. . . . I accuse you of seeking to obtain supreme power.” Barbaroux followed Louvet, and then Rebecqui too stepped forward to support the accusation. It was a fairly well-organised attack for the Gironde, but it should have been quickly followed up to the last conclusion and a vote of censure

<sup>1</sup> Gomel, *Histoire Financière de la Législation et Convention*, p. 280.

passed. Robespierre, obviously taken aback by the violence of the onslaught, requested that Louvet might be heard at length, and that then he should be allowed to reply. Danton intervened and complained that a systematic campaign of calumny against the Commune had been organised by the Gironde. He added that Marat was no personal friend of his, and scouted the idea of a triumvirate consisting of himself, Marat and Robespierre, an idea that had been put forward by his enemies and which he understood was believed in by a good many people.

Louvet then began a violent and vigorous attack on Robespierre, in which he accused him of trying to substitute communal government for national representation, and of giving France the government of Rome, where, under the name of *municipes* the provinces were subordinated to the sovereignty of the metropolis. It was Robespierre, he reminded his auditors, who had recommended Marat to the electors of Paris, and he, Louvet, would like to conclude his speech by asking that a decree of accusation be passed against Marat as well as Robespierre.

Robespierre, after listening to Louvet's speech, requested that he be allowed five days to prepare his defence. The discussion, unfortunately for Roland and his party, was thereupon adjourned for a week. This reprieve served Robespierre well, as, had the vote been taken that day, both he and Marat might have been condemned by a hostile House. As it was, the adjournment gave the Jacobins plenty of time to vilify and attack virtuous Roland in their clubs and their

newspapers. There is no doubt that this *coup* was planned by Madame Roland, but it failed to produce the desired result, as Robespierre was not cornered that evening, but allowed so long a period of grace to recover from the assault. Louvet's onslaught was followed up in the next day or two by a resolution of Barbaroux, proposing that the Convention should ordain the following decrees :

- (1) That the capital should lose its right of national representation, as it did not know how to protect itself from insult and violence.
- (2) That departmental guards, in conjunction with the armed sections of Paris, should guard the National Assembly and all public buildings.
- (3) That the Convention should constitute itself a Court of Justice to judge conspirators.
- (4) That the Convention should crush the Municipality of Paris.

We shall not be far wrong in attributing the action of both Louvet and Barbaroux to the inspiration of Madame Roland. The attack and the resolutions were brave enough, but because they were not pushed home, they proved to be mere blows in the air. The full bearing of the Barbaroux resolutions was entirely missed by the Marais or middle party in the House. They were in the secrets neither of the Mountain nor the Gironde, and saw no particular importance in the proposals themselves. And even when Buzot put forward a plea—and again we can trace his source of inspiration—that all who provoked to murder should be punished with death, which was another blow at the instigators of the massacres, it failed to



secure the attention or provoke the interest of the great majority of the members of the Convention. The resolutions just fell, still-born, to the earth.

Warned by these attacks and resolutions of the implacable hostility of the Gironde, Robespierre and Marat did not remain idle; like sensible people they set to work to save themselves. It was not in their power as yet to triumph openly over the numerically superior party of the "new aristocrats," and while working for this triumph they were obliged to offer temporary allegiance to the powers that were. As a consequence of this the Council General of the Commune appeared at the bar of the Assembly begging, in reply to Roland's heavy indictment in his "Report on the State of Paris," to be given time to get the city in order, and also petitioned against the introduction of a Departmental Guard into Paris. In both instances their requests were acceded to.

And so Madame Roland and her men were foiled at every turn—for the attacks of the Gironde merely served to unite its enemies. On the 5th of November, the day fixed for Robespierre's speech in answer to the accusations of Louvet, hooligans ran through Paris, crying, "To the guillotine with Robespierre, Danton and Marat!" while others cried for the death of "Roland, Lasource and Guadet."

Robespierre defended himself from the charge of aspiring to the position of a Greek tyrant. He said that the 2nd of September was the logical outcome of the 10th of August, and that if one began to talk about legality, why, everything to do with the Revolution from the fall of the Bastille was an illegality. He won the



sympathy of his auditors as he spoke ; for he had at last learnt how to hypnotise an assembly. The honours of the discussion were with Robespierre and not Louvet ; and as the Assembly passed to the order of the day it was generally felt that he had managed to justify himself.

The next day the current of men's thoughts was changed, and ministerial and party differences were sunk in the glorious news of Jemappes. Dumouriez' servant, who brought the news to Paris, was presented, on coming down to the Convention, with a civic crown and officer's epaulettes by a grateful country. Everybody rejoiced in this victory except Marat, who reproached Frenchmen with their enthusiasm. Dumouriez must have lied, he insinuated, as to the number of dead ; Mountains were not attacked so cheaply, no baggage or artillery had been taken ; it must have been a retreat on the part of the Austrians rather than a defeat ; and anyway, Dumouriez' frontal attack could have had no point except the immolation of the brave battalions of Paris. A few people recalled to mind the rude way in which Marat had treated Dumouriez after Valmy,<sup>1</sup> but this was the first public indication of the fact that even the Girondin general was to be discredited and brought to nothing by the Commune. Pache was now at the War Office and intimate with Marat, whose manner of life he imitated. He sided with the people against the "new aristocrats," dismissed all Servan's well-trained assistants and clerks and replaced them by "patriots." Dumouriez says that the Ministry for War became

<sup>1</sup> Madelin, p. 277.

“an indecent tavern in which 400 clerks and a number of women, affecting a filthy appearance and a most impudent cynicism, did nothing and rushed about. . . . All work was done in a red cap, and every one was called *thou*, even the Minister himself.” Any one was sure of an audience with Pache if only he were dirty and greasy enough. He dined with his concierge and allowed his children to play in the streets. No wonder that Marat could attack Dumouriez, for he was sure through the War Minister of being able sooner or later to accomplish his downfall.

To the superficial observer Dumouriez' position seemed unassailable; he was for the moment the idol of the mob, for he had conquered Belgium. The moral results of the victory of Jemappes<sup>1</sup> were considerable, for it not only caused the Austrian Government and the *émigrés* to abandon Brussels, but it gave a great fillip to recruiting and military ardour in France. Moderate Republicans loved to think of their general's entry into Brussels; it seemed somehow to consecrate war into an ideal, beautiful thing. When Dumouriez entered this town in triumph<sup>2</sup> the magistrates brought him the keys of the city, but he said with a fine gesture, “Citizens, keep your keys and keep them well. Never be ruled by a foreigner.” This, as Madame Roland and Condorcet delighted to think, was Girondin war in practice, bringing “freedom to peoples and terror to kings.” The Mountain was far from approving this quixoticism—it was busy maturing other views; money was short, and philanthropic

<sup>1</sup> November 6.

<sup>2</sup> November 13.

war did not pay ; it was all very well—and Danton and Marat thought alike about this—to bring freedom to peoples, but there was something in the old doctrine of natural frontiers, and something in the annexation of conquered countries, something indeed in getting advantage as an exchange for sacrifice. The War Minister was no Girondin, and though he was officially obliged to compliment Dumouriez on his glorious feat of arms, he was determined to make further campaigns on the same lines impossible. Dumouriez must be brought to heel ; war must be made to pay. It was heart-breaking to Dumouriez, when he was in possession of Brussels, Liège, Malines, Antwerp and Namur—in fact, of all Belgium to the Meuse—to be dependent on such a creature as Pache, to be hung up for want of supplies. So far his armies had lived upon the country ; but it was now winter-time, there was no forage to be had, horses were dying in hundreds, and at least 10,000 soldiers had deserted from hunger. There came a moment when nothing was supplied by the Home Government at all ; Dumouriez peremptorily demanded supplies, and Pache smilingly assured the Assembly that supplies had been and still were plentiful and regular. Buzot spoke up bravely in the Convention about the state of affairs at the War Office :

“ If any Minister in any other department had done a tenth part of the things that the Minister for War had done, there would be a hundred decrees of accusation out against him. . . . It is the Minister himself who must be got at, it is on his feeble or treacherous head that the responsibility must fall, for it is now a question of the

safety of the Empire. Our armies are denuded of all supplies. Representatives of the people, it is for you to go to their help."

Here was another vigorous attack, which again was not followed up. Members and Ministers alike seemed unwilling to believe in Pache's iniquities, even though their own Commissioners had come back from the front and had investigated and reported on the real state of the armies. Of what use was it for Madame Roland to inspire friend after friend to brave words if they were never to be backed up by blows? All her intimates seemed as incapable of vigorous statesmanlike action, as they were capable of rhetorical speech-making. It was to her a desperate disappointment; she had misjudged them all; the idea that such men could ever govern was absurd.

Two decrees of the Assembly on the 24th and the 29th of November, ordering new elections to the Commune, were met by violent opposition from the Mountain. The Girondins thought by this manœuvre that at last they might get the better of Marat and their worst enemies; but though they succeeded in getting the elections ordained they could not inspire men to vote. Only 10,000 or 11,000 out of 160,000 voted in Paris at all, and these were the dregs of the populace and the *employés* of the Commune. In most sections, to the Girondins' supreme annoyance, not more than two hundred voted, in some cases not more than a hundred. The Rolands in this had one more proof, if proof were needed, of Marat's power and of the ultimate doom of themselves and their party.

## CHAPTER XV

### THE IRON SAFE

“Mon enfant, l'erreur et les illusions sont le partage de l'homme . . . les fleurs qui couvrent les précipices et qu'il faut bien se garder d'arracher.”—  
MADAME DE SABRAN.

ROLAND was too much taken up by the affairs of his own department to be able to investigate into the machinations of Pache at the War Office, much as his wife would have liked him to do so. In October we find him writing on the foundation of National Museums for educating the youth of “this vast empire.” In November he sent out a circular recommending the destruction of feudal castles, and directing that their more valuable contents should be preserved for the National Library and Museum. He advised that country houses should be divided up into lodgings for peasant owners and cultivators. He also did a good deal of street planning in Paris, and was specially concerned with the completion of the Louvre and with the adaptation of the theatre within the Tuileries for the housing of the Assembly. But as Minister for Home Affairs he had more immediate problems to consider than those of reconstruction. One of them in particular presented peculiar difficulties to his mind all through the autumn, and that was the question of the King's fate. Madame Roland, who had no



respect for crowned heads in theory and no sympathy with Louis XVI. and Marie Antoinette in practice, was frankly bored by the matter, it seemed to her so unimportant. Now that France had accepted a Republican form of government she would cheerfully have left the King and Queen under lock and key for ever. Roland and Garat, however, as the Ministers responsible for Home Affairs and Justice, were obliged to take steps to solve the problem, and on assuming office they had arranged that a Committee of Conventionalists should draw up a report on the conduct of the King. This report was presented by Valazé to the Assembly on the 6th of November, the day of Jemappes; it embodied all available information as to the intrigues and intentions of the King, and was destined to constitute the formal charge against him. It was proposed to print and circulate this evidence, and Danton in supporting the proposal said: "It is clear that if the *ci-devant* King wished to violate, betray and lose the French nation, it is in the eternal justice of things that he should be condemned."<sup>1</sup> The question whether Louis could be judged at all was naturally raised, and in the event of this being agreed, another question arose, What Tribunal could pronounce judgment upon him? Pétion inveighed against the "stupid dogma of the inviolability of a constitutional sovereign," and Danton said to Lameth, who was pleading not only the inviolability but the impeccability of the sovereign, "What childishness! What does that matter to those who will a thing and can carry it

<sup>1</sup> Danton, par Madelin, p. 203.

out? Was Charles I. killed legally? . . . If the King comes up for judgment he is doomed." Robespierre argued that the Sovereign could not legally be tried, and therefore recommended that he should be put out of the way at once without a trial. He, Danton and Saint Just held that it was a matter of political expediency to dispose quietly of Louis, and that no amount of formality or red-tape could convert such a deed into an act of justice.

It was a vile suggestion, but there was a great deal to be said for it. The Gironde, however, shrank from adopting it, and advised the Convention to decree that Louis should be tried, leaving the question of judges unsettled. A great deal of capital was made out of this so-called "leniency" by the Opposition. It began to be commonly said that the Girondins were Royalists, intriguers with Pitt, determined to save Louis at any cost. It was also said that the Minister of the Interior in particular was "corrupting public opinion" in the departments by subsidising journalists, and by distributing 2000 copies of Gorsas' paper every day in the provinces. More than any one else he was supposed to be plunging the country once more into darkness. He was even reported to be in communication with Narbonne, Malouet and other refugees in London; his desire that a Departmental Guard should be stationed in Paris was attributed to the fact that he wished to assemble 10,000 armed "moderates" in the capital to carry out a counter-revolution. Roland's position and authority were gradually cut away from under him by the gutter press,

and advantage was taken of the discovery of a safe of the King's private papers at the Tuileries still further to discredit him.

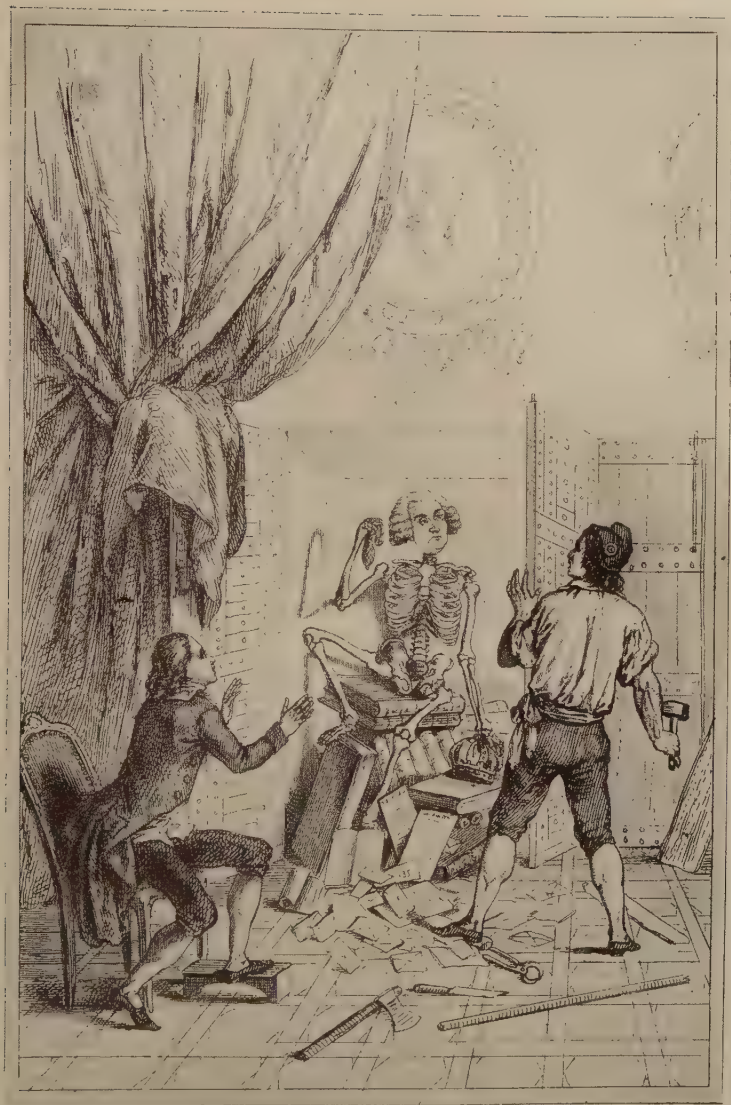
A fortnight after Valazé had presented his report on the King's conduct to the House, a locksmith called on Heurtier, the Inspector-General of National Buildings, and "denounced" an iron safe which he said he had constructed for the King at the Tuileries eight months previously. Heurtier informed his chief, Roland, of the existence of the safe, and together they went off to investigate the find. The locksmith showed them a panel in the wainscoting which, on being pressed, revealed an iron door. Inside the door was a rough hole full of papers. Roland and Heurtier cleared all the papers out of the hole, placed them in a couple of napkins and carried them away to the Home Office. This action was considered peculiarly suspicious by Marat and his minions. It was rumoured that a list of sixteen members of the Legislative in the pay of the King was amongst the papers. Marat asked whether virtuous Roland had not abstracted it? At the very moment, he pointed out, at which Roland took the papers away so secretly, two members of the Convention were in the Tuileries making an inventory of documents. Why had they not been summoned as witnesses? Roland had actually passed them and had bowed silently to them on his way to the safe. Why had Roland ignored these patriots? According to his enemies there could be but one answer, that he had sorted the papers privately in order to remove all traces of his own guilt. It was quite useless for Heurtier

and the locksmith to make depositions to the effect that the papers had not been tampered with, and that they had not lost sight of them until they were produced by the Minister of the Interior in the Riding School; no one believed them, and Roland became one of the most "suspected" people in Paris.

The discovery of the safe thrilled Madame Roland to the marrow, and she followed with deepest interest the examination by a Committee of the Convention of the papers found in it. At last she was justified of all her distrust, of her letter to the King in May, and of all the opinions she had expressed both in writing and conversation as to the treachery of the "royal puppet." Even her opinion of Mirabeau was proved right; the papers showed he had been intriguing with the Court, and the horrified Convention immediately proscribed his name, ordered his bust to be broken up and his ashes removed from the Pantheon.

There is no need here to dwell longer upon the contents of the safe; it is enough to know that its discovery sealed the fate of Louis XVI. Incidentally it was also used by Maratist and Mountain to discredit the unfortunate Minister for Home Affairs. Vilification is one of the penalties that public men suffer when things go wrong, and insults were showered upon him. He was "an advocate without talent," "an insipid writer," "an inept traveller," "an ignorant inspector"—what a creature to occupy "the most important post in the Empire"! The audacity of taking on his vain shoulders the responsibility for the whole





M. ROLAND OPENS THE IRON SAFE AT THE TUILERIES, AND  
DISCOVERS THE SKELETON OF MIRABEAU





Louis XVI. affair, to seize a *dépôt* privately that belonged to the nation! Why, it was nothing short of conspiracy! The scourge known as Calonne was not so malignant as Roland "the Colossus that strides across France, taking all government for his province!"

On the 3rd of December Pétion moved, and it was unanimously agreed that the King should be tried without delay. On the 11th of December Louis Capet, King of the French, appeared at the bar of the House and heard the inventory of his crimes read aloud by Barbaroux. He looked fat, pale, sickly, with a three days' beard upon his chin. His eyesight was affected, and he seemed like a convalescent out for the first time after a long illness. In spite of his dejected and miserable appearance he impressed the Assembly favourably by his answers, and attracted a certain amount of sympathy to himself, but this soon wore off and men got accustomed to the idea of judging and executing a king as well as any other person.

This month of December 1792 was exceptionally dreary for the Rolands as well as for the King and Queen. Not only was the Minister laid up for ten days with his old complaint, erysipelas, but his writing-table was littered with letters threatening assassination, and with newspaper cuttings accusing him of every villainy. His wife, too, came in for a good share of obloquy. A man called Achille Viard went so far as to denounce her personally to Chabot as a Royalist who had, through his agency, corresponded with Narbonne, Talleyrand and other refugees in England. Chabot forthwith "accused" her and

the Girondins, her friends, of trying to save the King and of trying to bring about a counter-revolution through the assembling of a Departmental Army in the capital. Madame Roland was glad that some definite charge had been formulated against her, that at last an open attack had been made, for it enabled her to face her calumniators. She appeared at the bar of the Assembly one dark winter day, looking radiant, and quite confident in her ability to clear herself. In ringing tones she denied the existence of such a conspiracy, whereupon, with truly French gallantry, the captivated Convention accorded her the honours of the sitting. All the members rose to their feet as she saluted the President and left the bar in triumph. Marat, however, turned to Camille Desmoulins saying, "The tribunes are silent, the people are wiser than we are." And indeed, owing to the efforts of this "friend of the people," every Girondin had come by this time to be regarded by the mob as an aristocrat. It, the mob, had been carefully educated by Hébert in the *Père Duchesne* to compare "the toothless hag Roland" to her "predecessors" Du Barry and Pompadour, to accuse her of "corrupting the deputies her lovers," of "poisoning the provinces with her fruitful pen," of "behaving like Circe at the feasts she gave," of "perverting the whole ministry." They had been taught to see "the *ci-devant* queen lying on a sofa surrounded by *beaux-esprits*, talking of war, politics and everything else," and behaving in her lighter moments as a courtesan.

As threatening letters and calumnies rained

faster and faster upon the Rolands, their one preoccupation became to save their child, to get Eudora out of Paris if possible. But they found they were too late, the provinces themselves were not over safe. There was nothing to be done but to carry on, as though everything were for the best in the best of worlds. On Christmas Eve 1792 Madame Roland wrote a long letter to her friend Colonel Servan. The defence of Louis XVI. was to be advocated in the Convention on the following day, and she anticipated that it might be accompanied by rioting and possibly by an organised massacre. If a massacre took place she thought it extremely likely that she and her husband would be among the victims.

“ I have arranged my affairs as if for the great voyage, and I await events with a firm heart. Our social institutions make life so laborious for honest people that it is no great loss, and I have so familiarised myself with the idea of death, that I shall appear before the assassins when they come, persuaded that there is only one course that may deter them, and that is courage and contempt of their blows. Threats of assassination pour in upon me, my table is inundated with them, for they do me the honour to hate me. . . . Marat barks at me, he never leaves me alone, . . . I doubt whether worse things have been said about Antoinette, to whom they compare me. . . . I am everything that is most monstrous, and the women of the markets wish to treat me like Madame Lamballe.

“ In consequence I send you my portrait; one must leave something of oneself with one's friends. . . . Pache is wrecking the machine. . . . Would you believe it that since Louvet has been unable<sup>1</sup> to edit the *Sentinelle* we have vainly tried three other persons, and now, for want of editors, it has come to an end. Take a little care of

<sup>1</sup> November 21.

our memory when nothing else remains, they are capable of fouling it, and perhaps even now have lying accounts of us ready for insertion in the newspapers. Most of our deputies go about armed to the teeth. Every one advises us to sleep out of our hotel. How charming is the Liberty of Paris !

“ Well, if you had remained we should not be at this pass. From the moment that you had Federal troops under your orders you could have organised them and made of them a body that would command respect. . . . Pache has merely disgusted them, dismissed them, neutralised them. If they save us to-morrow it will be on their own account and by flying in the face of discipline. Truly I am tired of this world ; it was not made for honest people, and there is some reason for dislodging them.

“ Farewell, brave citizen. I honour and love you with all my heart. I will write again in a few days if the storm has not swept us away. If it has, remember my girl . . . the excellent woman with her will replace me. She must go to her uncle at Villefranche and there follow out her destiny, inheriting from her parents a good example, a little glory, an excellent guide and an honest fortune.”

Before going to bed that night she also wrote to the Canon, her brother-in-law, asking him to take charge of Eudora and to assure the future of “ her excellent governess, Mademoiselle Mignot.”

“ To-morrow, for all we know, may be our last day ; in any case we shall not have been useless to the salvation of the Republic, and our fall may teach the departments what dangers they should fight against.

“ Good-bye, my brother. I have too little time to waste many words, but I am, as you have always known me, devoted to the duties I love, appreciating life for its natural gifts and the enjoyment of virtue, but finding it fairly laborious and quitting it without regret, having accustomed myself so to despise death that I should never



flee it or fear it. I leave a good example to my girl, a memory to be cherished ; her father adds to this a little glory : she has in you and Mademoiselle Mignot wise guardians. She will have enough money to suffice for happiness. May she judge, feel, profit of life with as clear a conscience and as expansive a soul as that of her parents."

And then to "little brother Lanthénas," with whom she had quarrelled over Buzot, she wrote :

"I have too much courage to need to display courage. I value life too little to trouble whether I keep it or lose it : further, I find existence so hard for decent people that I should not be sorry to see its term shortened : I might even view the end with a kind of sensual pleasure. I know men well enough to expect nothing of their justice. . . . Certainly it is not clear what the end of the Revolution will be, what are now called *parties* will be judged by posterity ; but I am persuaded that in that judgment my husband will receive glory, and I have the presentiment that it will be paid for with our lives. Perhaps it is necessary that pure victims should be offered up to call down the reign of Justice upon earth. I shall never leave my husband, I shall share his destiny, and I shall die as I have lived, finding no happiness save in doing my duty, no matter how much it may cost me. I shall return with gladness to nature, which in our sad circumstances seems to hold no other refuge than the tomb."

In spite of Madame Roland's forebodings the Christmas of 1792 brought about no massacres and no rioting, but it did bring crops of new rumours and new scandals to the ears of credulous deputies. Marat, the watchdog of the people's interests, informed the Assembly on New Year's Eve that "the Roland faction" was holding secret meetings at a room in the Palais Royal, with the view of getting Pache out of the Ministry.

Madame Jullien, whose husband sat in the Convention, noted at this time in a letter that Vergniaud, Brissot, Guadet, "had gone to earth"—"One would doubt whether they were of the Assembly at all." "What are they working at underground?" he asked his wife. Some of the Rolands' enemies said they were trying to eliminate Pache from the War Office, others that they were busy devising methods for saving the King. We must draw our own conclusions from the records of the sittings of the Assembly at this time. We note that a series of attacks were made by Girondins on the War Minister. Gensonné<sup>1</sup> accused him of filling the War Office with incompetent, dishonest persons who would be the cause of more expense than the war itself: Dufriche-Valazé<sup>2</sup> protested against his negligence and prevarications. Roland caused a scene in the Assembly by refusing to share Cabinet responsibility for the War Minister's accounts.<sup>3</sup> A letter of his appeared in the *Moniteur* the same day stating that hardly any expenditure connected with the army had been submitted to the Executive. Sillery<sup>4</sup> spoke of the blame attaching to Pache for having in the course of a campaign given the arrangement for supplying and victualling the armies to utterly inexperienced people. There seems to be no reasonable doubt that the Girondin party at this time inspired by Madame Roland concentrated their efforts on getting some order into the chaos of army administration.

It is interesting to note that although Vergniaud and Brissot were generally considered the leaders

<sup>1</sup> December 30.

<sup>2</sup> January 2.

<sup>3</sup> January 6.

<sup>4</sup> January 9.

of the Gironde, the one was too indolent and the other too much of a journalist to make successful organisers of a party. The command had been taken over in reality by Buzot.<sup>1</sup> He held meetings and gave orders to his followers either at the back of the benches on the Right of the Assembly or else on the stairs of the Tribune. Meetings for the discussion of policy and action were also held in various houses.<sup>2</sup> Madame Roland's friend began to be known to colleagues as General Buzot.

Madame Jullien, who did not understand that to Girondins the saving of the King was a matter of no importance, was convinced that the Roland faction would triumph as it was so "unspeakably wicked." It seemed to her quite certain—and we must remember that she formed no opinions herself but only repeated those of others—that the Girondins meant to bring about civil war since "they refuse to abandon their intention of filling the capital with departmental troops." She thought it unlikely that they would dare to justify the King, though they evidently meant to save him. From saying that all aristocrats were now Brissotins or Girondins, Madame Jullien, whose convictions changed every few days, came to believe all Brissotins and Girondins to be aristocrats. Just because she was so changeable and emotional and wanting in real perception she serves excellently as a barometer for the feeling of the people of Paris from day to day. In a world composed according to her of plots and counterplots, she could not

<sup>1</sup> His colleague Guffroy called him at this time General Buzot.

<sup>2</sup> Rue de Richelieu 148 ; rue la Harpe ; rue d'Orleans 10 ; Chez Vimca, passage des Écuries.

realise that any action might originate in an ideal, she could not understand any more than the mob did, that the Girondins were making a last stand for a free and efficient administration as they understood the words. She could not imagine that, just as the Royal Family had hoped to be saved from the violence of the people by Austrian troops, so did the Gironde hope for the Departmental Guard to enable them to carry on liberal and enlightened government in security. The cases were only parallel, but to their enemies they had come to appear identical.

So long as Danton had dominated the Executive Council it had at any rate been inspired by a definite policy ; when he left it it became a committee of departmental chiefs without a policy. The introduction of the Maratists Pache and Garat into the Council had made real unity of action impossible. Concerted measures to be resolved upon by the Cabinet as a whole were no longer to be hoped for, and so it came about that there really was no government worthy of the name in France during October, November and December 1792. Each department managed its own affairs assisted by a committee of the Convention, but there was no coherent official policy as such. The disadvantage of this state of affairs was acutely felt by the armies on the Frontier, by the Communes in the provinces, and by the starved Navy ; so acutely was it felt that the Convention under the inspiration of Danton decided to reincarnate the force that should have resided in the Executive Council by creating from its own Committees a new body to

be called "The Committee of General Defence." The Committees of War, Marine, Finance, Diplomacy, Constitution and Commerce were each asked to nominate three of their own members to represent them on this Central Committee. It was a measure of expediency. Neither Danton nor Robespierre became members of this body, but Brissot was Vice-President of it and Guadet, Gensonné, Pétion and other Girondins were nominated to it. The new Defence Committee began to sit on the 5th of January, and it soon disposed of Pache, the inefficient Secretary for War. He was dismissed from office, but being far too valuable to Marat to be allowed to disappear from public life, we find him reappearing in a month's time as the "patriot" Mayor of Paris.

On the 9th of January Roland presented a report to the Convention on the anarchic state of France. Departmental feeling, he said, was strongly in favour of maintaining a truly National form of Representative Government. The idea that the country should be run by the demagogues of Paris was abhorrent to the good sense of the Nation. He pointed out that owing to the amazing efficiency of the Jacobin organisation throughout the land every provincial interest and person seemed to be watched and reported on to Paris. So complete was the system of espionage that men feared to make themselves conspicuous by becoming mayors or taking local administrative posts; they were afraid of making enemies of the people. He reported that about 11,000 priests had been hunted out of France, and as he was disposed to put most of the rural disorders



down to them, it was in his opinion a good riddance. The report made melancholy reading; the Minister seemed to have no fresh ideas for reducing chaos once more to order, no hope for the better government of his country. A week later the Assembly listened to the reading of a more spirited communication from the Minister for Home Affairs. He had been asked to give information as to the number of better-class people at that time leaving Paris, and also to confirm or deny the rumour that Pache, the late War Minister, had supplied the city sections with guns destined for the army. Roland stated that large numbers of well-to-do persons were leaving the city, and asked how any one could expect decent citizens to remain in a place where at any moment they might be rounded up and shot. As for Pache, he certainly had diverted guns from the army in the field to the wards of Paris. This admission, we may be sure, was made in no grudging spirit. Two days after this candid declaration a number of Roland's pamphlets were burnt publicly on the Carrousel. The Maratists marked their disapproval of public men in various ways.

It soon became obvious to every parliamentarian that the Executive Council which had lost its virtue when Danton resigned had now become nothing but a tool in the hands of the new Committee of General Defence. The Rolands talked much of resignation; could the emasculation of the Council have had anything to do with this, or was it merely that they were tired out and utterly disillusioned?

About this time<sup>1</sup> Madame Roland wrote a

<sup>1</sup> January 15.

letter to "the incomparable Lavater" which to some extent answers the question :

"The violent situation in which we are does not leave me a moment's liberty. Always in the tempest, always under the hatchet of the people, we march in the glint of lightning, and if we had not got quiet consciences which carry us through all, we might find life tedious. But if one has a little strength of soul, one becomes familiar with ideas that are most difficult to hold ; courage is but a habit. . . . Proscription floats over our heads, but we must go on pulling, we must reach the goal if possible, and anyway merit ostracism if it is to be the reward of virtue."

The 15th of January was the day on which the Assembly was required to vote on the question of the King's culpability. Almost unanimously was that culpability admitted.<sup>1</sup> For some reason that is not on the surface obvious, the Gironde, after this vote had been taken, pressed that the country itself should be consulted on the question by means of a referendum. This motion was defeated.<sup>2</sup> Partly in order to reveal the Gironde "in their true complexion" as saviours of the King, and partly as a touchstone of patriotism, Marat proposed that the Assembly accept the suggestion that the King's fate should be settled by a nominal roll-call of members. This motion was agreed to, the alternative sentences, now culpability was admitted, being death, conditional death or imprisonment. On the 16th of January at 8 p.m. the deputies began one after another to mount the Tribune to pronounce their verdict. This procession lasted for twenty-four hours.

<sup>1</sup> 692 out of 721.

<sup>2</sup> By 423 votes to 286. *Archives parlementaires*, 1<sup>ère</sup> série, tome lvii.

Egalité, it was noticed with great interest, voted for death. Vergniaud, who presided over the sitting, gave the first vote; it was for death. Men asked themselves whether Marat had really intimidated the Gironde, since to every one's surprise Pétion, Buzot, Rebecqui, Isnard, Ducos, Barbaroux, Gensonné, Lasource, Carra and others of the Right voted for unconditional death when it was well known that they still desired to consult the country as to culpability and to make the execution of the sentence conditional on its ratification by the people themselves. At 8 p.m. on the 17th the President was able to announce that out of 721 votes 387 had been cast for "death" and 334 for "conditional death."

The day before the King died Paris was placarded with a proclamation announcing the time and manner of the execution, signed by Roland and his five colleagues of the Executive Council. It was the last occasion on which he signed a document in his official capacity.

Louis XVI. asked for three days in which to prepare himself for his end. On the 21st of January he was guillotined. According to Madame Jullien, "the death of the King passed off like the banishment of the Tarquins. The people displayed a majesty and calm which would have done credit to the best days of Republican Rome."<sup>1</sup>

On the 19th of January an address<sup>2</sup> written by Roland was posted up in the streets of Paris. In it the following sentence occurred: "I expect to be dismissed or sacrificed, but I demand to be judged." On the day of the execution the

<sup>1</sup> *Journal d'une Bourgeoise*, p. 337.

<sup>2</sup> *Moniteur*, January 21.

blow anticipated in this poster fell on the Rolands' heads. Danton, it seems, at last felt himself strong enough to give the Minister of the Interior his quietus, for he took advantage of a funeral oration on murdered Lepeltier (delivered during the hour of the King's death) to say in the Assembly :

"I am proud to form part of this body of citizens,"—with his hand he indicated the Mountain—

"I conjure these men who have been represented to us as the enemies of every kind of Government, not to be angry that they have been mistaken for the enemies of liberty. Pétion, according to my ideas, was wrong. Pétion was weak ; I have always thought him so, and he may say whatever he likes about me, but I confess that it makes me unhappy to know that France no longer gives him her confidence. I reproach Pétion with not having explained sufficiently clearly the situation of those who served the 'public concern' more energetically than himself. Perhaps Pétion might have told you that those deplorable scenes, those terrible massacres of which so much capital has been made in order to embitter the departments against Paris—perhaps he might have told you that no human power could have stopped the effects of this revolutionary thirst, this fury which had seized a great people. . . . If he had explained things frankly, if he had told us the truth about those terrible events, no doubt many calumnies would have been spared us and many evils to the Republic.

"I ask you, Citizens—you have seen me in the Ministry—to say if I have not always striven for unity. I appeal to you, Pétion, and you, Brissot—I appeal to you all because I wish to show you what I am—I appeal to you all because I wish you all to know me. I have had the courage to be silent for three months, but as I now have to speak of other persons I must show myself as I

really am. Well, I submit myself to your judgment. Have I not shown deference to that old man who now is Minister of the Interior ? Have I not told you—have you not agreed with me—as to the fatal acrimony of his character, just at the moment when it was desirable—nay, indispensable, that whoever filled in any degree the post of Consul should by his character be able to conciliate men who differed with him ? You agree with me ? Well, Roland—whose intentions I do not traduce, but whose character I seek to make known—Roland looks upon all those people who do not hold his thoughts and his opinions as villains and enemies of the country. My dear fellow-Citizens, I assure you, and you especially, Lanthénas, whose friendship with Roland makes your evidence valuable—Citizens, it is not I alone who demand that this man shall no longer occupy his post—it is the judgment of his equals which rates him as incapable of filling it. I demand that for the good of the Republic Roland shall no longer be Minister. Weigh my impartiality well. . . . I desire the salvation of the Republic. I am a stranger to vengeance ; I have no need of it, and I declare that you cannot suspect my intentions when I ask the help of those who value Roland's friendship most. Having feared to be struck by a mandate of arrest in those sadly famous days of September, Roland has ever since seen Paris through black spectacles. . . . He thought that the great tree of Liberty, whose roots hold together the soil of the Republic—he thought that this tree might be pulled down. His resentment against Paris dates from those days : Paris which will endure so long as a Republic endures, Paris which is the city of all France, Paris which is the city of all illumination. This is Roland's great error, and the great mistake he made is entirely his own fault. He tried, because of his hatred, to stir up the departments against Paris. When he spoke to me about the Departmental Guard, I said : 'This measure is repugnant to all my principles, but it will pass, and no sooner will this Guard arrive in Paris than it



will be inspired by the spirit of the people—the people which has no other passion but that of liberty.’ And, Citizens, have you now, even now, any proof that the Federals of the departments have other sentiments than those of the citizens of Paris? Have you any doubt now on this subject? The whole mistake—and I say it with regret—is due to Roland’s acrimonious temper. . . . Roland has caused pamphlets to be circulated in which he has spread his own mistakes broadcast over the land. He has said that Paris meant to dominate France. I will give you no advice, but by drawing your attention to the things I have told you about I think you will have found the source of evil, and once this source has been damned you may then devote yourselves, with some hope of success, to the salvation of the country.”<sup>1</sup>

This damaging indictment was gravely spoken, and produced a tremendous impression on Danton’s auditors. From that hour Roland’s fate was sealed. It was hardly necessary for other deputies to elaborate the theme, for Thuriot to produce a resolution that the *Bureau de l’Esprit Public* be done away with, for Robespierre to demand an exact account of the funds spent on this object.

On the 23rd of January Vergniaud, as President of the Convention, read a long letter from Roland, written the day before, announcing his retirement. He had lost hope, and had no courage to put up any fight. Moreover, he was ill, and had for long been most scurrilously attacked on all sides. There was no evil thing which was not by this time believed against him. He was a traitor and conspirator, and he had, according to Collot d’Herbois, sent 12,000,000 livres to England, which he had saved out of the public funds entrusted to him.

<sup>1</sup> Aulard, *Histoire politique de la Rév. Fr.*, vol. v. pp. 275–87.

It was really heart-breaking, after having dealt honestly and scrupulously with public money, after suffering for his principles (as he had done in the previous May, when he was dismissed from office by the King), to be so misunderstood and so grievously calumniated. He says himself that if amongst his friends of the Gironde he had found but one solitary man who dared to mount the Tribune and demand that the Convention should judge between him and his accusers, he would not have resigned and would have been ready to face the worst storms; but no friend came forward to support him in his hour of trial. They remained silent, and one of them, "little brother Lanthénas," went over to the enemy.

The rough draft of his letter of resignation is written entirely by Madame Roland; many emendations are in her handwriting and a few in his. She was evidently at one with him in his decision.

The letter, which was read aloud by Vergniaud in the Assembly, ran as follows :

"I think I have fulfilled my duties as a member of the Executive Council, and I do not wish to shirk responsibility for the deliberations in which I have taken an effective part, but I declare that I will not sign the general account which is to be presented to the Assembly on the 1st of February, as this account includes expenditure which has never been explained to me and over which I am not satisfied, with special reference to supplies for the armies and the numbers of men who compose the armies."

Roland went on, and one notes the hand of his wife in the self-laudation that follows :

"Obliged as I was to correspond with all the departments, I have therein displayed great activity and ardent

zeal, both of which are inherent in my character and principles. Devoted to liberty even under despotism, too simple in my habits to need money, too old to desire anything save glory, enthusiastic for my idol—the public good, I have striven for it with an energy and firmness which no obstacle could affright. Calumny was let loose against me; its absurdity may fitly compare with its audacity. I have braved everything; I had to; there is no abomination, no persecution, no danger which he who consecrates himself to doing good should not endure. The only limit his devotion may set itself is his own inutility, once he has ceased to inspire confidence. This moment has come for me. I had sworn to remain at my post till the Convention dismissed me, but our political situation is such that anything that may cause division or distrust in the Legislative body may bring about great misfortunes. It is perhaps of little consequence that men should be unjust about me; neither my loss nor my glory is an affair of State. Everything that may excite disquiet or give rise to passion must be rigorously proscribed. It is not enough that a man in office should merely be clean-handed—he must not even be the object of suspicion. I call the whole severity of the Convention down on my Administration. I do not fear the result. I shall await it within the walls of Paris. I present myself to my contemporaries as to posterity with my works; they speak for me.”

Vergniaud sat down as he finished reading, and the Right applauded vigorously and clamoured that the letter should be printed for departmental distribution. “No, no!” cried the Left. After some discussion it was agreed to print the letter and to make Garat Minister of the Interior in Roland’s stead—Garat, who in Madame Roland’s estimation was merely an amiable member of society, a mediocre man of letters, a creature of poor health and great natural

indolence. He had filled the office of Minister of Justice since the 11th of October, and, according to Madame Roland, was "detestable as an administrator." A more unworthy successor to virtuous, industrious Roland she felt it would be hard to find, so greatly had her opinions changed since the days when she was instrumental in jobbing both him and Pache into office. Experience often makes men bitter as well as wise. The Rolands left the Hôtel de l'Intérieur directly the letter of resignation had been dispatched, and Sophie Grandchamp, who for some weeks had seen nothing of them, was intensely surprised to hear that her friends were going back to the little flat in the rue de la Harpe, which she had helped them to secure and to furnish.

Roland's one idea on leaving the Ministry was to obtain some certificate from the Convention that he had done so with clean hands. Before he could bring himself to quit Paris and seek oblivion in the solitude of Clos, he insisted on having his meticulously kept accounts passed by the Assembly. Eight times he appealed that they should be approved, eight times the Convention passed to the order of the day, after referring them to an audit commission. To an austere honest business man the mortification of being treated in this way was most galling.

It is a kind of relief to know the Rolands out of office. Four months of systematic calumny together with the insults and lies flung at them daily by the gutter press hid them completely from the view of their contemporaries, and even obscured our own vision a little. There was, as we know, no

iniquity of which they were not reported guilty, no treason too base for them to have originated, but in all the welter of rumour and misrepresentation there was one fact in the Rolands' lives which was unguessed by friend and enemy alike. There was a secret kept by Roland, his wife and Buzot till death swept them all away, and that secret was a love secret. A new revelation had come into Manon's life that autumn, and sometimes, when one is inclined to be surprised at Roland for resigning office, one realises with a shock that not only was he being buffeted by waves of unpopularity and misfortune, but that he was also living through a poignant domestic crisis. Renewing the famous scene in that much-read novel the *Princesse de Clèves*, his wife one day told him of her passionate love, her complete devotion to another man. We may imagine that if that avowal took place at Christmas 1792, and there is no reason to suppose it may not have done so, it may just have meant the overthrow of all things to that poor prematurely aged Minister of the Interior. We do not know how he felt, but it requires no stretched imagination to realise how the world must have crumbled under his feet, how politics became like dust and ashes, how work seemed to have no point. For thirteen years he had depended on this woman; for thirteen years she had slaved for him, nursed him, made him politically, belonged to him body and soul; and now she had suddenly faded into thin air—her soul, her thoughts, her personality had escaped his jurisdiction. She was no longer his. It is likely that she must have told him her secret in



that dreary December of 1792 ; there is no information to go on ; we can but surmise the date of her confession. She must have fallen in love with Buzot during October and November ; no doubt she fought it as an obsession, and tried to put it away from her ; but at last it became too strong, she could no longer help admitting it to herself, and the moment she admitted it to herself, she admitted it to Roland. That was her idea of honour ; many people have called it cruel : honour often is.

## CHAPTER XVI

### THE FALL OF THE GIRONDE

“ERASME : Tout est donc hasard ?

CHARLES V. : Oui, pourvu qu'on donne ce nom à un ordre que l'on ne connaît pas.”

*Dialogue des Morts*, FONTENELLE.

THE fortunes of the Girondins are henceforward so bound up with the fortunes of Dumouriez that we must look outside Paris for the key to the meaning of events during the next two or three months in the capital. Dumouriez had been in Paris at the time of the King's execution, and thus incidentally, of course, during the days of Roland's dismissal and resignation. One cannot definitely connect him with either event, but he was no friend to the Rolands, as we know, and circumstances and interests made him particularly anxious to propitiate Danton, and to work in collaboration with him. He had come to Paris early in January (having left Danton in Belgium<sup>1</sup>) to turn Pache out of office and to advise the Government on several important matters. For one thing he was eager to convince the Executive of the folly of the decree<sup>2</sup> confiscating religious property in Belgium to pay for the war, and to point out that this merely meant that a country invaded on the pretext of giving liberty to its inhabitants had become bitterly hostile to

<sup>1</sup> Danton returned to Paris, January 14.

<sup>2</sup> December 15.

its liberators; he also desired to convince Ministers of the immediate necessity of conscription if the war was to be carried out with vigour and continuity; and further, he wished to advocate the advantage of undertaking his pet project, the invasion of Holland.

Dumouriez left Paris on the 26th of January, having persuaded the Government of the necessity of conscription and the advisability of an advance into Holland, but having been unable either to get the decree confiscating religious property rescinded, or to have the Low Countries exempted from its operation. The members of a Government which had banished priests and seized Church property could hardly be expected to depart from their principles in this way. Dumouriez, however, was disappointed at his want of success, and says that it was "with despair in his heart" that he set out for army headquarters in Belgium.

After Roland's retirement there was no one left in public life to interfere with Danton, who became the real, though not the titular, head of the State, the fount of policy as of authority and organisation. At his back was his own creation, the Defence Committee.

In his love of phrases and formulæ Danton was a true son of the Revolution. The "doctrine of Natural Frontiers" dazzled him, and having resolved on the invasion of Holland and the annexation of Belgium and Nice he vindicated his policy in the Assembly ten days after the King's death in a great speech, in which he said: "The limits of France are marked by Nature, and we must attain them at all four points of the

horizon : the ocean, the shores of the Rhine, the Alps, the Pyrenees. These shall terminate the frontiers of our Republic, and no power can prevent our achieving them.”<sup>1</sup> It was tantamount to declaring that France was about to annex Nice, Savoy, Geneva, Swiss Jura, Rhenish Germany, Belgium and a part of Holland,<sup>2</sup> a frank announcement that the war was to be fought in order to realise a dream of empire. Danton at least was bolder than some modern statesmen; and as his words reverberated through Europe, England resolved to take any risk sooner than let a great foreign Power annex Antwerp and control the Scheldt. As a consequence of the enunciation of the doctrine of Natural Frontiers, France, or rather Danton, soon found himself at war with England, the German Diet and Spain. A smaller man would have lost his head, but Danton was both too great and too inexperienced to do so. Danger and difficulties seemed to make him ever clearer and more resolute in mind. His whole soul now bent itself to making war efficiently, to procuring men, money and guns. The volunteer movement was over, it had died down when the first obvious danger from the Brunswick invasion had ended. Voluntary effort, though desirable and splendid in itself, has the disadvantages inseparable from spontaneity; it is incalculable in its results, and war cannot be made except by calculation, therefore Danton, since he could no longer depend on gifts of men or money for the armies, had to evolve other means of prosecuting the campaign. Conscription had become necessary—Dumouriez

<sup>1</sup> January 31.

<sup>2</sup> Madelin, *La Révolution*, p. 290.

and Danton had already agreed about that—and the Assembly on the recommendation of the Committee of General Defence was inspired to decree that 300,000 conscripts should be drawn by lot.

It is astounding to realise the nature of the business discussed by the Committee of General Defence during the month of the King's death. It included the proposal of Dumouriez to assume the offensive on a large scale through Holland ; the proposal of Laclos, the soldier author of *Les Liaisons dangereuses*, who had just been given a command in India,<sup>1</sup> to fight the English and the Dutch in Eastern waters with 15,000 men and fifteen ships of the line, to take the Cape of Good Hope and Ceylon *en route* and then, in conjunction with Tippoo Sahib, to seize Bengal ; the proposal that Biron should march on Rome, and Servan conquer Spain. The mere fact that Dumouriez' army in Belgium was almost destitute of supplies, ammunition, transport and reserves did not hamper the Girondins on the Defence Committee in their discussion of further campaigns. They seemed to have relied, in the old English fashion, on everything coming right somehow.

Danton did his best to organise things at the centre, but in spite of all his talent and energy, weeks and months of work were needed before the system of supplies and recruiting so completely disorganised by Pache could be made efficient and dependable. Moreover, he could not stay altogether in Paris ; he was also indispensable in Belgium, and his life during the winter months was a continual flitting backwards and forwards to the

<sup>1</sup> Dumouriez, *Mémoires*, vol. iii. p. 364.



frontier. Dumouriez suffered horribly during the reorganisation of War Office administration, and fell into despair at the masters it was his business to serve. Sometimes he felt himself entirely forgotten, for he was not even kept informed of the course of foreign affairs; for example, he learnt through the medium of the public Press on the 7th of February, and in the midst of negotiations with the English representatives at The Hague, that France had decided to declare war upon England a week earlier.

He continued, however, in spite of increasing disgust and hopelessness, to concentrate all his energies on the invasion of Holland. But hardly had he begun his general advance than he was dragged back by the Austrian attack on Belgium. Miranda, who was besieging Maestricht, had to retreat hurriedly in great disorder on Liège,<sup>1</sup> and two days later was hunted out of the city by Austrians. Dumouriez hastened back in order to defend Brussels.<sup>2</sup> Anger with the Convention smouldered in his heart.<sup>3</sup> On the 11th of March he could contain himself no longer, and wrote to the Assembly from Louvain, making one of many direct attacks on the ex-War Minister Pache.<sup>4</sup> He complained of the hardships and privations the troops had endured throughout the winter and the autumn, and observed that Beurnonville, the new War Minister, had not been in office long enough for the armies to feel the effect of his good administration. Fully aware as the Assembly must be of the deplorable condi-

<sup>1</sup> March 3.

<sup>2</sup> Dumouriez, *Mémoires*, vol. iii. p. 247.

<sup>3</sup> March 8.

<sup>4</sup> Dismissed Feb. 3.

tion of the armies under his command, it had chosen to complicate matters still further by provoking war with England, and he would remind legislators that in consequence of their infamous decree—confiscating religious property—the country people, priests and monks of Belgium were arming against them. From having been a war of liberation, the war has become a criminal war for France, for the inhabitants of the Low Countries, indeed, a *sacred* war. Again he peremptorily demanded that the decree of confiscation should be rescinded.

Danton, his heart heavy with private grief and his soul filled with a deep realisation of the desperate situation of the armies in Belgium, put his whole energy into coping with the situation. Early in March <sup>1</sup> he made a great appeal in the Assembly, bidding France rise to the height of her opportunity. He said :

“ We have often found before now that the temper of the French people needs danger to discover all its energy. . . . Well, the moment of danger is here; if you choose *not* to rush to the side of your brothers in Belgium, if Dumouriez is enveloped, if his troops are obliged to lay down their arms—who dare calculate the incalculable misery entailed by such a surrender? Once our Public Fortune is destroyed, why, 600,000 Frenchmen may be killed as a consequence. Citizens, you have not a moment to lose! . . . ”

And again :

“ We must have men, and France is stuffed with men. . . . Paris, which has been given so bad a name, is, I say, called upon once more to give France the impulse that produced all our Triumphs. We promised the army in Belgium 30,000 men on the 1st of February; none

<sup>1</sup> March 10.

have reached them. I demand that commissioners now be named to raise a force in the forty-eight sections of Paris. . . . Let your commissioners go forth this instant, this very night, let them say to the rich : Your riches must pay for our deeds ; the people have only blood to give, and they are prodigal of that. Now, wretched men, be prodigal of your money. . . . Character is needed—it has been found nowhere. . . . Remember, I was in this very post when the enemy invaded France. I said then to pretended patriots : Your discussions are inimical to the success of Liberty, your discussions are despicable. I wash my hands of you all, you are traitors. Let us beat the enemy and then go on with our disputes. I said, what is it to me that my name should perish so long as France is free ? I am content to be taken for a drinker of blood. Let us drink the blood of the enemies of humanity but let Europe be free.”

Applause drowned his words, but he went on : “Fulfil your destiny without passion, without dissent ; let us go with the tide of Liberty !”

On the 15th of March Danton made a great effort to get the best men of the Gironde to work in harmony with him. It seemed terrible to his practical mind that in a time of great national crisis strength should be wasted in quarrels between groups inside the Assembly. All vigour, all experience were needed to fight enemies without the State ; enemies within the State must sink their animosities. He had so few helpers versed in statecraft, so few men of experience in affairs. Vergniaud wished for the alliance, Bancal hoped something might come of the conferences, but the Rolands were unchangeably hostile, and though they had no direct say in affairs their influence was still strong on a certain number of the party,

and General Buzot still received his orders from his friend. The memory of the September massacres made the hand of Danton to her a hand that no honest man could clasp in friendship. To Madame Roland and her friends it was stained with innocent blood.

In replying to Danton, who was pleading one day that the past should be wiped out, Guadet cried: "Everything, everything, save the cut-throats and their accomplices!" Danton did not reply, and Guadet cried again excitedly: "Let it be war, and may one of us perish." Danton then seized his hand and looked him between the eyes. "Guadet, Guadet," he said, "you want war, you shall have death."<sup>1</sup> Bailleul says too<sup>2</sup> that Danton addressed Guadet thus: "Guadet, you do not know how to make the sacrifice of your opinions to the country, you will be the victim of your own obstinacy," and again, according to Garat,<sup>3</sup> Danton said: "Twenty times I offered them peace, they would not have it; they refuse to believe in me in order to preserve the right of destroying me." From the time of these condemned overtures, Danton had no mercy on the Gironde, their days in public life were numbered.

As a consequence of the miserable failure of Dumouriez' Dutch campaign, and the famine prices to which food had risen, Maratist agitators found it easy to organise a riot in the course of which the offices of two Girondin newspapers,—*Le Courrier des Départements* and *La Chronique de Paris*—were wrecked. It is always easy to work

<sup>1</sup> Danton, par Madelin, p. 225.

<sup>2</sup> *Études critiques*, tome ii. p. 168.

<sup>3</sup> *Mémoires sur la Révolution*, p. 193.

on the feelings of a starving crowd, and Marat popularised and tempered his political agitation by calling for the blood of the profiteers who had forced bread, flour, fats and soap up to such exorbitant figures. Dumouriez was regarded as a Girondin General, and this riot<sup>1</sup> was but a foretaste of the insurrection organised for the 31st of May for the complete destruction of the Gironde. The Convention did not suffer during this rising, as it was protected by Federal troops from Finisterre, who for once served the purpose Madame Roland had designed them for.

All through the early days of March Robespierre and Marat had been busy indoctrinating the sections of Paris and the people in the street with stories of "treason among our generals." "We must sweep away the traitors, we must suspend the sword of justice over powerful conspirators and perfidious generals," Robespierre had said. The common people had been worked up to demand a permanent guillotine. Danton adopted the suggestion, and on the 10th of March, the evening of his great speech demanding men for the army, the Revolutionary Tribunal was established by a vote of the Assembly. In vain did Vergniaud and his colleagues protest that they were setting up an Inquisition a thousand times more desperate than that of Spain, and that Girondins would die sooner than consent to its establishment. In vain did Buzot, greatly agitated, rush to the Tribune and declare he was sick of the despotism exercised by the Assembly. Jullien sneeringly said, "Buzot chatters at great

<sup>1</sup> March 9-10.



length in order to prevent the setting up of the tribunal to punish counter-revolutionaries."

The indignant dispatch which Dumouriez had sent off from Louvain on the 11th of March was discussed in the Assembly a few days later. It roused no sympathy amongst deputies, who felt they were being insulted and despised by their imperious servant. Instead of rescinding the decree for the confiscation of religious property they merely decided to send Danton and Delacroix to Louvain at once to bring the General to his senses. But it was too late, for Dumouriez had resolved to play the part of Monck, and was seeking a victory which might leave him free to march on Paris and reduce the Assembly to reason. In this hope he attacked the enemy at Neerwinden on the 18th of March, and suffered a decisive defeat.

On the 20th Danton saw him at Louvain. He found the General beside himself over the defeat, but succeeded in persuading him to write a few words to the President of the Convention, begging that judgment on his dispatch be postponed and his explanations awaited. Danton carried this note back to Paris, but Dumouriez, on reflection, realised very clearly that there was no mercy to be expected from the Convention, and so began at once to negotiate with the enemy. On the 25th of March at Ath, over a bottle of champagne, he discussed the question of joining the Austrians with Colonel Mack. After dinner, and in the presence of Valence, Chartres, Thouvenot and Montjoye, he boastfully declared his design of putting an end to the Convention and of re-

establishing Constitutional Monarchy in France with the assistance of his new friends.

Meanwhile Danton had reached Paris with Dumouriez' letter, and the Convention decided to summon the General to give an account of himself publicly at the bar of the House. Beurnonville, the War Minister, was charged with the business of getting him there, and so went with three members of the Convention, including Madame Roland's friend Bancal, to army headquarters at Saint-Armand to fetch him. Dumouriez, realising that this recall spelt suspension, and probably an appearance before the Revolutionary Tribunal, had the envoys arrested and sent them to Clerfayt, the Austrian general, as hostages for the good behaviour of Paris, at the same time intimating that he would march on the capital the next day to put an end to the anarchy there. In this project he was foiled by the patriotism of his own army. Disillusioned as to the temper of his troops, a few days later he galloped over to the Austrians, accompanied by eight hussars, while Davoût shouted at some volunteers to fire at his disappearing figure. And so we may leave Dumouriez in the camp of the Austrians, for he no longer figures in our story except in so far as his desertion affected the fate of the Girondins in the capital. No one will ever realise the feeling of those Girondins when they learnt that the General, whose loyalty was identified with the existence of their party, had deserted France. For them it was a personal calamity—while for France they feared it must mean annihilation. Where now was the soldier to be found on

whom the nation in her hour of crisis could depend ?

The rumour of Dumouriez' desertion reached Paris on the 28th of March, though it was not officially confirmed till the 3rd of April. As an immediate result the Committee of General Defence, reorganised on the 25th of March<sup>1</sup> as the Committee of Public Safety, and consisting of nine Girondins, nine men of the Marais and six Montagnards, was purged of "seditious" elements, and in its place appeared the terrible Committee of Nine. This small Committee, still designated as that of Public Safety,<sup>2</sup> was composed entirely of Montagnards, for no Girondin, it was felt, could ever be trusted in public affairs again. As Buzot told Madame Roland on hearing of Dumouriez' defection, "there was not a department, not a town, not a miserable club in all France that did not at once denounce Girondins as Royalists." Indeed after this episode the position of the Gironde became intolerable, for every suggestion and calumny of the gutter press had suddenly materialised. Dumouriez' act became the proof of the party's bad faith. Girondins were openly accused of *incivisme*, of complicity with Pitt and Coburg, of being traitors of the vilest description.

The Rolands themselves were directly affected by Dumouriez' action, for on the night of the 31st of March the Committee of Public Safety caused all the papers at their flat to be seized for its inspection. Naturally it was essential that if there were any question of further treason or

<sup>1</sup> Sorel, *L'Europe et la Rév. Fr.*, vol. iii. p. 331.

<sup>2</sup> April 6.

plot the Committee should wish to become cognisant of it immediately, but it is easy to imagine Madame Roland's indignation at having her privacy violated.

From the papers found in the Rolands' apartment a report was made for the Committee of Public Safety by Citizen Brival. This report was printed and purported to substantiate the charge that Roland had corrupted the mind of the public. Nine unsigned letters from one Gadol, a secret agent employed by the Minister to influence opinion in the sections and to undermine Mountain propaganda, were unfortunately found, six addressed to Madame Roland and three to "*le patriarche*." Gadol was convinced, it appeared, of the necessity of a departmental guard. "Nothing can be wiser," he wrote on the 21st of October, "than the citizeness's motive in wishing for a departmental guard. . . . This guard will come into being, already it is looked upon with less horror, and as soon as a favourable moment presents itself we will seize it." This agent tells of the way he uses the money supplied to him: he gives dinners and then allows the diners to think he sympathises with and admires their patriotism, plies them with wine and when they are drunk discovers all their secrets. Beside the Gadol reports private letters were drawn upon by the investigators. Barbaroux, writing to Madame Roland, says: "The same letter (a letter from Marseilles) contains a plan for attacking Constantinople in order to exact an apology for the insult of the Porte which has refused to receive our ambassador Sernonville. You know quite

well I can't send it on to you—because Danton does not approve of your being a Minister.” After this gibe at Madame Roland, he writes again: “Yesterday we were at the Club of the Marseillais with Buzot and Salles. . . . Never did Buzot speak with more eloquence: he thundered, he attracted all hearts to him, his whole soul was depicted in his discourse. Buzot can indeed say, ‘I have a battalion of friends.’ ”

Addresses to Louis Capet, dated June the 20th and 21st, were also found, demanding the recall of the patriot Ministers. Men asked how it was that Roland should have such documents in his private house. Being official papers they should have been filed in the Bureau of Home Affairs, but since they were not so filed the petitions and their signatures must have been faked by Roland in order to intrigue himself back into office.

As much capital as possible was made out of Roland's papers, but they really were not incriminating. Secret agents were employed by every one at that time to further party ends. If the papers proved anything at all, they proved Roland to be an industrious Minister trying to maintain himself and his party in power, in order that certain measures which he thought for the advantage of the country should be carried through.

All through February and March Roland, as we know, had been trying, though without success, to get his accounts audited.<sup>1</sup> From his correspondence with Garat, his successor in office, and

<sup>1</sup> Letters to the Convention on this subject, February 10, 24, March 28, April 7, 11, 29, May 3, 10.



his letters to Lanthénas, his once familiar friend, we see that he was growing very bitter, and was sick and tired of beating his head against official walls. He had no wish to go back into public life; but since he had no private fortune he was obliged to go on making applications for his pension as Inspector of Commerce. His wife had saved a little from the housekeeping at the Hôtel de l'Intérieur, a few thousand francs, and on this they could manage to live for a time, but not for long. In the meanwhile, they had to fall back on the *Dictionary of Manufactures* for a livelihood. Both he and his wife were anxious, naturally anxious, to get their child out of Paris, and applied towards the end of March for a provisional permit enabling them to travel to Villefranche. This they were unable to secure. To be idle and in suspense was far worse, they found, than to be busy and in suspense. There was so much time to think things over, and ugly possibilities preyed upon their minds. Sometimes they slept outside Paris for safety; once they did so for a whole week together. It did Roland good, but his wife did not need any such change, for she was gradually becoming more composed and more courageous. In her case it was partly the courage of indifference, for she did not care whether she lived or died. Roland got tired at last of self-preservation; it was a great strain on the nerves, as he had to admit: "We have been outside the walls for eight or ten days; now we are going back, for the fear of death will really become worse than death itself."

Danton, who in March had held out the hand of friendship to some members of the Gironde,

now joined in the general attack upon them. It became to him, as to the more advanced of the Paris sections, a measure of public safety to destroy them. The first official move against them as a party had been made in seizing Roland's papers; the second had consisted in their elimination from the Committee of Public Safety; the third blow was the authorising of Camille Desmoulins, Danton's henchman, to compose a lampoon on Roland's papers purporting to be the true story of the Brissotins. When it was finished he took his vile manuscript to the Jacobin Club and asked that body to defray the cost of printing it, adding that any one hearing the pages read aloud would at once ask, "Where is the scaffold?" and to Prud'homme he said, "I wager this work will send the Brissotins straight to the guillotine." Four thousand copies of this production were distributed in Paris the moment it was printed.

In this pamphlet, for it is hardly more, Desmoulins began by lauding the heroism of the French nation. Ninety thousand Prussians and Austrians had been stopped invading France by 17,000 Frenchmen, and had not Heaven proved itself, "through dysentery, the auxiliary of French arms"? Desmoulins went on to speak of "the 110,000 troops victoriously advancing everywhere in the cause of liberty." High destinies had awaited them—why were they unfulfilled? Why indeed? and Camille's answer was, because of Dumouriez and his accomplices, the friends of Pitt and Prussia.

Just as Brissot and Gensonné, in denouncing the Austrian Committee, had said suspicion was

enough to go upon and that there was no necessity for proof, so Camille in the same fashion was able to convince the people of Paris of the existence of an "Anglo-Prussian Committee."

Nothing, he declared, could be more patent than that the *Right* were partisans of royalty, accomplices of Dumouriez and Beurnonville, men desirous of dividing France into twenty or thirty Federal Republics, or in other words, scheming to overthrow her as a great nation. He continued in an even more exaggerated manner, for all the world as if he were exercising his rhetoric on the Jacobin Club :

"We have seen English newspapers echo the hymns from Talma's house, wherein Dumouriez was represented as a Turenne, and Roland as a Cicero ; while the one was but a mediocre adventurer, a butcher who in Rome would have been thrown from the Tarpeian rock for victories as bloody as that of Jemappes ; and the other so miserable a writer that when he was member of your Correspondence Committee you know he never wrote a passable letter, and that it was always necessary to correct it in several places both on account of the poverty of its ideas and the incorrectness of its style.<sup>1</sup> . . ."

He went on to say that Brissot "by Pitt's orders" had been lauded to the skies ; that Roland, too, had been praised in the House of Commons and elected honorary member of the Whig Constitutional Society. And further he asked whether Roland had not spent thousands in trying to ruin Marat's reputation ? and whether it was not Anacharsis Clootz who first gave the alarm in October by saying that he had been battling for four days with Roland for the unity of France

<sup>1</sup> *Histoire des Brissotins*, p. 17.

against that federative republic and dismemberment of the country for which Roland and his friends were openly conspiring? Then Desmoulins put another question: What was Dumouriez doing in letting the Prussians go free?—in *not* pursuing after Valmy? There must have been *some* arrangement, something unpatriotic about that too? A quotation out of one of Brissot's letters to Roland followed: "My dear Roland, I send you a list of people you should place. You and Lanthénas should keep it under your eyes to make sure you nominate no one except those recommended on the list." Desmoulins made further and yet more damaging insinuations. It was greatly to be feared that the once-trusted Pétion was bribable; indeed, it was open to doubt whether a single incorrupt man was to be found in the Gironde circle.

Roland he could not say enough about. He was a traitor to the country, and his letters proved that he was giving passports to emigrants—to women wishing to join their husbands abroad.

Desmoulins did not shrink from investigating and attacking the ex-Minister's private life: he hinted at domestic sorrows, and then at the falsification of public accounts, at the way the papers from the iron safe had been sorted before being presented to the Assembly. Then again, he asked what could have been more incriminating than the reported conversations held at Roland's table? Aided by the lovers of his Penelope, Roland hoped to become "the coachman of the counter-revolution," and have "as his lacqueys the two Ministers Clavières and Le Brun." And was it not shocking to good patriots to think of

the mischief done by the Rolandiste Press and the innumerable treasonable pamphlets which had emanated from the "*Bureau de Correspondance*"? The denunciatory language of the Revolution is often lurid and hysterical. Roland was spared no verbal excesses by his traducer, for had he not calumniated Paris in the eyes of Europe, and had not his friends, those Apostates of Liberty—Louvet, Brissot, Barbaroux—written and circulated the most libellous and envenomed publications?

There was certainly enough material in this lampoon to indict a hundred acts of accusation, since proof was not needed for these fabrications, presumption being enough. In conclusion, Desmoulins urged the Assembly, in language which even the denizens of the gutter could understand, "to vomit the Girondins forth from its belly."

What Desmoulins said in his pamphlet Robespierre said in the Assembly. Brissot, he assured his hearers, was the intimate friend of Dumouriez, and held the threads of all his conspiracies. There was no doubt the King of Prussia had been politely conducted back to the frontier after Valmy instead of being taken prisoner, just as there was no doubt that Brissot and his colleagues were in collusion with Dumouriez, indeed that Dumouriez was their tool. Brissotins, Rolandistes, Girondins had done their best to stir up civil war in the Council, in the Convention, in the Departments. They had destroyed the evidences of their guilt, the written proofs of which undoubtedly had existed in the iron safe. In Robespierre's opinion there was nothing to be done except to cite them to appear and answer for their conduct before the Revolutionary Tribunal.



It was becoming easier every day to hound people to death. The new Revolutionary Tribunal had held its first sitting on the 2nd of April. Executions were already taking place. It was only a question of time before the enemies of the Government met their doom. Madame Roland watched the course of events with a heavy heart. Danton was nearly at "*le sommet de son capitolé*." The Committee of Nine, in which unlimited power was vested, enabled him to maintain the Ministry in a state of complete subordination; but in spite of this she rejoiced to think that he could not yet dominate the Assembly itself. Though no Girondins sat on the Committee of Public Safety, they were still a powerful vote-snatching body in the Assembly, and as such made themselves extraordinarily objectionable to the powers of the moment. Marat was determined to put an end to their opposition, and used his position as President<sup>1</sup> of the Jacobin Club to organise opinion against them. From his Presidential Chair he denounced them as traitors for wishing to save the King's life by a referendum. It was true that those Jacobins, who had voted for the referendum or appeal to the people, had already on the 1st of March been expelled from the Club in response to a demand from the Communes which had returned them as members; but this was not enough for Marat, and on the 15th of April the sections of Paris, headed by his friend Mayor Pache, were inspired to appear at the bar of the Assembly to demand that the twenty-two leading Girondins should be deprived of their seats in the House in response to the will

<sup>1</sup> Elected April 4.

of the people. The net was being drawn closer and closer round the victims, though they hardly seemed to realise it, for they made a spirited counter-attack on their arch persecutor by denouncing Marat's address to the Departments on the King's death as "an incitement to murder," and by snatching a vote in the Assembly summoning Marat himself to appear before the Revolutionary Tribunal. They were playing a dangerous game, which they also did not seem to realise, in so far as they were for the first time setting at nought the inviolability of the deputy—an example which was not lost sight of by sectional agitators. The Commune, enraged by this attack upon Marat, declared that the Assembly had "returned like a dog to its vomit," and suddenly resolved that it was necessary that the Girondin element should be expelled altogether from the Councils of the Nation.

In summoning Marat to appear before the Revolutionary Tribunal the Girondins had done a very rash thing: they had not only offered an intolerable insult to the Commune, the Cordeliers and Jacobin Clubs, but also in the event of an acquittal they were risking their own complete annihilation. That Marat would be acquitted was a foregone conclusion, and we cannot wonder at it when we know the composition of the Tribunal and the triviality of the charge. In a frenzy of popular feeling he was carried in an arm-chair on the shoulders of the people from the Revolutionary Tribunal to the Assembly, and then on to the Presidential Chair of the Jacobins. Dressed in a shabby green overcoat with an ermine collar yellow

with age, his head crowned with oak leaves, he smiled sardonically upon the mob which threw flowers in his path, upon the women of the markets who smothered him in lilac—a new and more disgusting Cæsar than any Rome had seen in the worst ages of her corruption.

The triumph of Marat and the open hostility of Pache and the Paris sections were discussed in all their bearings by Madame Roland and Buzot. They were agreed that it was best to fight to the end, though all chance of success had vanished. Events were indeed beyond their control.

Since it had become imperative to Marat and Danton “to purge” the Assembly of “the Girondin pests,” the Commune began to consider how it could be most effectively done. In view of the behaviour of the Finisterre Federals in guarding the Convention on the 9th and 10th of March, an armed force might be required to deal the final blow. With this possibility in view it was decided by the Commune that one Boulanger should be appointed to command the armed sections in the Communal interest. Now the Commune was taking a great deal upon itself in reviving a post which had been abolished by the Assembly. The Assembly, however, met the affront by appointing a committee of twelve members to inquire into the matter forthwith. The Girondin element predominated on this committee, and in consequence it agreed to two decisions, firstly, the arrest of Hébert, “the soul of the Commune”; and secondly, the strengthening of the guard of the Assembly. Both these decisions accelerated the fall of the Gironde. On the 27th the indignant

Commune sent a deputation to the Assembly to reclaim Hébert. Isnard, who was presiding that day, addressed the Communal deputation with considerable excitement and apprehension. "Listen to what I am going to say to you: if ever during one of those insurrections which have taken place from time to time since the 10th of March—insurrections of which the magistrates have *not* warned the Assembly, if it ever happens that the National Representatives are attacked, I declare to you in the name of all France that Paris will be destroyed, yes, that all France will revenge such an attack, and soon men will seek on which side of the Seine Paris existed."

The sensitive and emotional Assembly, always the easy victim of oratory, tumultuously cheered this unwise and threatening speech, and the Girondins, who never gauged popular feeling correctly strolled out of the House thinking the tiresome question settled by this nonsensical tirade. When they had gone, Hérault took Isnard's place in the chair, and tried to pacify the irate petitioners from the Commune by conciliatory promises: "The force of reason and the force of the people are the same thing; you ask of us justice and a magistrate, the representatives of the people will give them to you." Quite suddenly members of the Committee of Public Safety intervened in the discussion, and the Assembly, consisting of only one hundred members (all the Gironde having left the House), decided to release Hébert and to suppress the so-called Committee of Twelve.

That evening the Gironde learnt that their new and last weapon, the Committee of Inquiry,



was broken. However, on the following day they tried to mend it by causing the Assembly to revote the Committee into existence again. Upon hearing of this ridiculously inconsequent action, the Commune broke into open revolt, and by the 30th of May a more or less organised insurrection was in progress.

The procedure adopted was the same that had proved so successful on the 10th of August. The city sections nominated commissaries, and these commissaries formed an Insurrectionary Committee which shouldered all emergent responsibilities. This Committee saw to it that the barriers of the city were shut, and summoned to its aid "soldiers" at forty sous each. Over this rabble it placed an unknown general—an ex-valet called Hanriot.

The new Insurrectionary Committee began operations by dissolving the Commune and then reaffirming or giving their authorisation to its Council General in the name of the city sections. After this formality it proceeded to the business for which it had been brought into existence. All the Girondin members, on learning of its creation, believed a new September massacre to be imminent. During the morning of the 31st of May they went to the Tuileries, where the Assembly was sitting, to find only three Mountain men there. Danton composedly assured them that "it would be nothing!" but from his face they guessed that something dreadful was about to happen. "Do you see," Louvet said to Guadet, "what a terrible hope lights up that hideous face? Without doubt it is to-day that Clodius exiles Cicero."



In order to find out what was really happening in the city the Assembly summoned Pache, the Mayor, and Garat, Minister of the Interior, to ask for a report on the situation. They both assured the Assembly of the complete tranquillity of Paris, and so members settled down to the business of the day. Armed petitioners, however, soon began to arrive in the corridors of the Tuileries, and disturb their peace by demanding the final suppression of the Committee of Twelve. Other confusing requests were also made. Couthon attacked the Twelve, and, supported by the mob, also demanded the accusation of "the Twenty-Two," that is to say of the twenty-two deputies whose elimination from the Assembly had been required by Pache at the bar of the House a fortnight earlier. The Committee of Public Safety intervened and intimated that it was in favour of the abolition of the Committee of Twelve. A general commotion and strife of tongues then took place, but after a confused and noisy interval Robespierre brought things to a head by mounting the Tribune and demanding the arrest of the Twenty-Two. To this the Assembly did not agree, but towards nightfall it was intimidated, by the appearance of armed men in the passages of the House, into once more voting the dissolution of the Committee of Twelve. That Saturday night Paris was illuminated, and lamps of rejoicing burnt in every public place.

Though Madame Roland had been dying to know what was going on in the House that day she had sat at home through all its long hours with her husband. Having been in bed for

five days with "nervous colic," she had been prevented from making use of the passport delivered to her the previous Saturday or Sunday which enabled her to take Eudora out of Paris. During the eventful day two or three people called, and told the Rolands items of news: one said the gates of the city were closed, another that all postmen had been arrested and that all letters were being opened and read, and most exasperating and alarming of all was the statement that letters so opened were sealed again with a seal bearing the inscription, "*Révolution du 31 Mai.*"<sup>1</sup> The publisher Pankoucke, who had got wind of the possible arrest of the Twenty-Two, came in to tell Madame Roland that he feared for her safety, and begged her to go to Marly from whence it would be easy to rescue her. The city could no longer be considered safe for any one connected with the Girondin party. She refused to do this; it had always been against the grain with her even to sleep out of Paris, and now she wished more than ever to play the game and show that she was not afraid. She had so often said to others, "Any one who puts their life before everything else, or indeed any one who counts it for anything at all in times of revolution, will never attach much value to virtue, honour or country," and the time had now come to put preaching into practice. Knowing the shocking fate of poor Madame de Lamballe's fair body, and fearing lest some similar degradation should overtake her own, she had slept when at the Hôtel de l'Intérieur with a pistol under her pillow. By

<sup>1</sup> *Mémoires de Pétion*, p. 107.



DUMOURIEZ

*After the portrait by F. Bonneville*



this time she had even given up doing this; she feared nothing, courage had become a habit.

All that dangerous Saturday passed in desultory talk or in listening to rumours. It was almost a relief when at half-past five the expected happened and six armed men appeared in the flat and read to Roland an order from the Insurrectionary Committee, by virtue of which they were empowered to arrest him. "I know no law by which such an authority as the one you mention can be constituted," said Roland in reply; "and I will not conform to any order emanating from such authority: if you employ violence I can only resist you with the strength of an old man, but I shall protest till my last moment."

In these early days no brutality was used in carrying out arrests, and the emissary of the Committee with great civility said, "I have no order to use violence, and I will convey your answer to the Council of the Commune, but I must leave my colleagues here with you." As Madame Roland listened to this conversation the idea suddenly came into her head that it might be a good thing to go off at once and denounce this illegal summons at the bar of the Convention. By so doing she might prevent Roland's arrest, or at any rate secure an immediate release. "To communicate this idea to my husband and write a letter to the President was the affair of but a few minutes," she tells us. Her servant being out, she left "a friend" with Roland, jumped into a cab and urged the driver to hurry to the Carrousel. The court of the Tuileries was filled with armed men, but she rushed through an empty space in



the middle of them, "hopping like a bird." As she was dressed very simply in a morning gown, black shawl and veil, she attracted no special attention—"no one seemed to recognise her." The *Palais National* was strongly guarded, and sentinels sent her from door to door. She despaired of ever getting inside the theatre where the Convention was sitting, but summoning up her courage she at last addressed the sentinels, who, like every one else in that day, were amenable to rhetoric: "Citizens! in this day of our country's salvation, in the midst of traitors whom we fear, you do not know how important are the notes which I have to give to the President—pray send for an usher that I may confide them to him." The door was at once opened to her, and she walked into the petitioners' lobby. There she asked for a messenger, and was told by one of the soldiers posted inside the building that one would soon come to her; then spying Auguste Rôze, one of the ten ushers of the Convention, whom she recognised as being the same man who had conducted her to the bar on the occasion of Viard's denunciation, she hailed him and requested to be allowed to appear at the bar. Rôze showed no particular pleasure at seeing her or sympathy with her plight. Somehow she found "that things were not the same, though her rights were just the same": once she had been a Minister's wife, "the invited guest of the Convention"; now she was "a mere suppliant." Rôze took the letter perfunctorily—she having explained the subject and her own impatience—and went away with it to the bureau, promising to urge that it should be

read at once. Meanwhile Madame Roland paced the lobby in natural agitation, and whenever the door into the Parliament House opened she tried to peer in and see what was happening. The din which burst out whenever the door did open was appalling. Every one seemed to be talking and shouting each other down. Rôze presently reappeared and said there was really nothing to be done, that the tumult inside the House was indescribable, that petitioners were crowding to the bar to demand the immediate arrest of the Twenty-Two ; that he himself had just smuggled Rabaut Saint-Etienne out of the building and that others were slipping away. Unwilling to abandon her mission, she begged Rôze to fetch Vergniaud into the lobby ; he did so, but Vergniaud could only assure Madame Roland that neither she nor any one else could possibly get a hearing that day ; that, in fact, the Convention itself was powerless to deal with the uproar. In spite of this discouragement she entreated him to take her into the House and let her say her own say. She felt excited and quite fearless. Vergniaud reiterated that it was not the moment for her to appear, and pacified her by saying that perhaps later on in the evening there might be an opportunity for her to speak with some chance of being listened to. Madame Roland thereupon decided to go home and to return to the Tuileries in an hour or two. She begged Vergniaud to acquaint all their common friends with the fact that she would be returning to the Assembly. Nearly all of these common friends were absent from the House at this time, as it happened ; as poor Vergniaud despondently observed, " They are

courageous enough, but they lack assiduity." On her way home Madame Roland rushed into Louvet's house in the rue Saint Honoré and scribbled a note for him telling him what had happened. "I then hurled myself into a cab and directed the man to drive to my house, but the cursèd horses didn't go fast enough, and presently we were stopped by marching battalions. I threw myself out of the cab, paid the coachman, ran in between the ranks and rushed home. Our concierge whispered to me as I passed that Roland was in the landlord's flat on the second floor." This "landlord's flat" was at the back of the courtyard and had an exit on to a street behind the rue des Maçons Sorbonne. As Madame Roland ran across the courtyard she felt as if her head were going round and round. Some one handed her a glass of wine, which steadied her, and then she was told an almost incredible story : the man charged to arrest Roland had been ordered to come back from the Insurrectionary Committee without an authorisation of arrest from the Council General of the Commune. Roland therefore had continued to protest against the illegality of the action, and the emissary, new to his job, begged the ex-Minister to embody his protest in writing, and then withdrew his men. Taking advantage of their absence, Roland had gone out by the back door of the landlord's flat and was sitting in the next house.<sup>1</sup> In this house Madame Roland had one last interview with her husband. She told him all that had happened at the Convention and what her plans were for the evening. We do not know what else they said

<sup>1</sup> Probably the lodging of Bosc.

to each other, but it is improbable that he told her he was escaping from Paris that night, as she went back almost immediately to the Convention to try and secure his release. The streets were by this time deserted and the lamps were alight, for it was past ten o'clock. The concierge called a cab, and Madame Roland left the husband she was never to see again, and once more drove off to the Place du Carrousel. Most of the soldiers had disappeared, only a few guards and two guns were posted at the door of the Tuileries or Palais National. The sitting, she found, was over. Casting about to find out what had happened and why everything was so quiet, she spied a group of sans-culottes, and advancing upon them with a smile, asked :

“ Well, citizens, did the guns go off well ? ”

“ Splendidly, and they all hugged each other and sang the hymn of the Marseillais, there round the tree of liberty.”

“ And is the Right pacified ? ” she asked, thinking of the safety of all her Girondin friends.

“ *Parbleu*, they had to yield to reason,” answered one of the men.

“ And what about the Committee of Twelve ? ” she continued.

“ Oh, it's in the ditch,” said he.

“ And what of the Twenty-Two ? ”

“ Oh, the Municipality is going to arrest them,” he said with assurance.

“ Yes, but *can* they ? ” she asked, thinking of Roland's protests.

“ Is it not the sovereign power ? And of course it must be right to put these dirty traitors



in their place and uphold the Republic," he replied sharply.

"But do you think the departments will be glad to see their representatives treated so?" she further queried, feeling that she was on dangerous ground.

"What do you mean?" he said. "Parisians do nothing except in conjunction with the departments; they've said so to the Convention."

"I'm not so sure of that," said Madame Roland, who became all of a sudden her old dictatorial self, "for in order to find out their views, primary assemblies should have been summoned."

"And were they needed on the 10th of August?" asked the man. "Did not the departments approve Paris then? They will do the same now. It is Paris that saves them."

"It may be Paris who is losing herself," said Madame Roland.

After this conversation she walked back with the sansculotte to her cab, and as she stepped into it a nice-looking dog rubbed up against her skirt.

"Is that poor animal yours?" said the coachman to her in a kind voice.

"No; I don't know anything about him," she said gravely, as if she were discussing a person, while really she was thinking of something quite different. "Please stop at the Galleries of the Louvre."<sup>1</sup> The cab started, and they had only driven a few yards when the coachman pulled up; the dog, it appeared, was not following, and he

<sup>1</sup> All the *rez-de-chaussées* of the Louvre Seine front had been converted into lodgings for artists in 1608.



was longing to take it home to his little boy. Madame Roland thought it so nice of him that she told him to catch the dog and give it her to hold. It was delighted at being petted, and jumped up on to her knee.

Her friend Pasquier,<sup>1</sup> who lodged in the Louvre, was in bed when she arrived, but he got up to let her in, and together they plotted Roland's escape for the early evening of the next day. As she drove away from this interview her cab was stopped by a sentinel. She was rather apprehensive, but the coachman assured her by saying it was the usual thing at that time of night.

A corporal opened the door of the cab and asked who was inside.

"A citizeness," replied Madame Roland.

"Where do you come from?" he continued.

"From the Convention," she said.

"And that's quite true," interpolated the coachman, as if he was afraid his fare would not be believed.

"Where are you going?" further asked the corporal.

"To my own house," she answered.

"And have you no parcels?" continued the man.

"No, nothing—look," and she moved her skirts to show how empty was the cab.

"But the sitting is over," he added rather suspiciously.

"Yes," said Madame Roland, "and I am very vexed about it, for I had a petition to make."

"A woman, and at this hour?" he said. "It's inconceivable, it's imprudent."

<sup>1</sup> A painter in enamels from Villefranche.

“ Yes, but it’s not at all usual for me, and I don’t like doing it ; naturally you must suppose that the mission was important,” answered Madame Roland.

“ Is Madame alone ? ” said the man.

“ How do you mean, sir, alone ? ” pompously retorted the lady. “ Can’t you see that innocence and truth are beside me—what more do I need ? ”

“ All right, I accept what you say,” said the guard wearily.

“ And you do well, for what I say is well said,” said Madame Roland with dignity, feeling as if she had won a victory over the whole Municipality.

The horses of her cab were dreadfully tired and had to be led by the bridle to make them move at all. At last they reached the rue la Harpe, and she paid the driver off at her door and walked up the stairs to the flat. Suddenly a man, who had concealed himself behind the *porte-cochère*, pounced out on her and demanded to see Roland at once. He told her that the ex-Minister was to be arrested that night. Madame Roland took little notice of the interloper, went upstairs quietly to her rooms, kissed her child and then sat down to write a letter to Roland, whom she still imagined was concealed in the next street. As she says in her *Mémoires*, it would have been useless for her to join Roland at Bosc’s lodging ; for one thing, it would have made his chance of escape hopeless to have herself and a child tacked on to him, and then again she could not bear the idea of leaving her servants in the lurch. It was about midnight when she got home, and soon she was interrupted by a loud knocking at the

door ; she opened it, and found a deputation from the Commune asking for Roland. She told them her husband was not at home. The officer asked her where he was and when he would return. She could only tell them the truth, that he had left the house while she was at the Convention. On hearing this the men withdrew, leaving a sentinel at her door ; she sat down to supper, finished her letter to her husband and then went to bed. Having slept heavily for about an hour she was awakened by her maid, who came in to tell her that “ gentlemen of the section ” wished to speak to her. At once she realised the meaning of these words, and to the maid’s astonishment began to dress herself as if for the street. When ready, she walked into the next room and was greeted by the words: “ We come, citizeness, to arrest you and to lock up your apartment.”

“ Where is your authorisation ? ” she asked calmly.

“ Here ”—and the man took out a mandate from the Insurrectionary Committee. Madame Roland read it, and saw at once that it was illegal, in that it embodied no charge, and she also remembered that nocturnal arrests were not permitted. After rapidly considering the question of resistance she decided that it was useless to think of it, so she asked the men civilly how they intended to proceed, and they informed her that they had first to fetch the justice of the peace for her section. This was immediately done, and then seals were placed on windows, cupboards and drawers—one man even wanted to fix a seal on the pianoforte, to Madame Roland’s amusement.

She asked to be allowed to make up a parcel of clothes for herself and one for her child. Over fifty people from the street were by this time wandering in and out of her rooms: the smell of their dirty persons and clothes was horrible. The officer, whom she appealed to, did not dare to order these loafers out, for the people had to be conciliated. She wrote one more letter to a "friend" about her girl, but when the men insisted they must read it before it was sealed, she tore it up in tiny pieces.

It was on Sunday the 1st of June at 7 a.m. that she left her home. Her servants and her girl watched her in tears, and as she bid them farewell she begged them to have patience and hope. "You have people there who love you," observed one of the commissaries. "I have never had any others near me," she replied.

Outside the house she found she had to walk "between hedges of armed men" to a cab drawn up at the opposite side of the street. A crowd of sight-seers hung about, and as she walked slowly she had a good look at every one present, including her escort. Many of her neighbours' windows were open, and various women shouted "*A la guillotine!*" through them. The commissary asked if she would like the blinds of the cab down; she said certainly not, for she was afraid of no man's looks. The guards complimented her on the firmness she was able to display in this trying moment.

After a few minutes' drive they arrived at the Abbaye, where the first objects that greeted her eyes were five or six camp-beds in a dark corridor still

occupied by men. From this passage she went up a narrow, dirty staircase, at the top of which stood the smiling wife of the concierge, Lavacquerie, who did not expect her and had nothing ready for her. The commissaries took their leave, and she was asked what she would like for breakfast ; then she was shown into a temporary bedroom, where she sat down to think things out. Her sensations were not at all disagreeable : all responsibility had suddenly slipped from her shoulders ; she was in the inexorable grip of fate. This in itself was a rest after the horrid uncertainty of the last months. " I consecrated myself to my destiny," is what she writes down in her diary, but it must have been a feeling of intense relief that overcame her, just as when one has crept into bed after a long and tiring day. She did nothing further, except to find out what the cost of living was in prison and get a permit for her maid to come to her in gaol. All day, however, she listened with inexpressible anxiety for the shouting of the newspaper boys and to all the noises of the street. Grandpré, the Inspector of Prisons, appointed by Roland, came to see her as soon as he knew of her arrest : he urged her to write a protest to the Assembly ; if only she would write, he would come back in a couple of hours and fetch the letter.

Madame Roland was right to strain her ears for news that day, for great things were going on in Paris. Hanriot, the valet general, was hard at work coaching his army for their evening work, and Marat, too, was a busy man all day. In the evening, however, he found time to steal into the belfry of the Hôtel de Ville and toll the bell in



the darkness. It was the signal of the insurrection he had planned, an insurrection which he conducted from first to last himself. Towards midnight the troops of Hanriot took up their positions round the Tuileries, and by dawn sixty guns were trained upon the *Palais National*. About 80,000 men of the sections were holding the approaches, and the volunteers for the Vendée were massed in the Place du Carrousel.<sup>1</sup>

Though Madame Roland longed with all her soul to know what was happening to the Girondins her friends, though she heard the tolling of the midnight bells, the trampling of the crowds in the streets, she did not know as completely as we know what really happened that night. She did not know, for example, that Grégoire at nine that evening had read a new petition from the city sections claiming that "the Twelve, the correspondents of Dumouriez, the men who incite the inhabitants of the departments against the people of Paris," should be immediately proclaimed. Madame Roland was the prey of conjecture and uncertainty. She would have given much to know exactly how events were moving.

On the following morning some of the Girondin members walked courageously into the trap prepared for them at the Palais National. Barbaroux and Lanjuinais were the first to arrive at the Assembly, then came Isnard, Lanthénas, Fauchet and others. A letter from Clavières, the Finance Minister, excusing his absence, was read, explaining that he had been obliged to hide in order to avoid arrest, and he asked for protection from

<sup>1</sup> Madelin, *La Révolution Française*, p. 303.

the House in order that he might continue his official work. Brissot, Pétion, Guadet, Gensonné, Vergniaud, Louvet, Buzot, Gorsas, did not come to the House: some of them were engaged in trying to make good their escape from Paris. Every one seemed in a nervous mood, but business was quietly proceeded with, reports of disasters in La Vendée and Finisterre were read out as well as an account of the massacre of 800 patriots at Lyons. This last item of news made the blood run cold in many veins. Presently the murmur of an approaching crowd being heard in the corridors of the House, Lanjuinais pluckily went to the Tribune, protested against the oppression of the Commune and demanded the arrest of the rebel civic authorities. The petitioners, who by Marat's orders had by that time crowded into the Assembly, then spoke, saying: "The crimes of the factions in the Assembly are known to you all; we come to denounce them for the last time." Having made this ominous declaration, they all rushed out of the theatre.

Barère as a way out of the difficulty moved that "the Twenty-Two" who were so obnoxious to the Commune should proscribe themselves, should resign, in fact. Isnard, Lanthénas and Fauchet agreed to this act of self-immolation, but Lanjuinais scouted the very idea of it; whereupon Chabot insulted him, and Lanjuinais said, "When the ancients prepared a sacrifice, they crowned the victims they led to the altar with flowers and fillets; the priest offered up the sacrifice, but he did not insult it." Barbaroux held high his Antinous-like head and said, "I have sworn to

die at my post. I shall hold to my oath." There was a moment of stupefaction—no one knew what ought to be done; danger was in the air, and some deputies tried to leave the Palace, but they soon came back indignant; they had been maltreated—Boissy d'Anglas showed torn clothes—they had been pushed back roughly into the Tuileries; what could it all mean? Barère cried out, "Let us prove we are free! I request that the Assembly go and deliberate in the midst of the armed force, a force which no doubt will protect it." Hérault, the President, rose to carry out this resolution, and a most remarkable scene followed as three hundred bareheaded deputies moved out in a compact wedge into the Carrousel. There they were faced by a line of guns, an armed crowd, and Hanriot, the "General" of the mob, on his black horse. "What do the people want?" asked Hérault. "The Convention only wishes their happiness." "Hérault," said the ex-valet, "the people has not risen to listen to phrases; it wants twenty-four guilty men delivered to it." Pricking his spurs into his horse, he shouted, "Gunners, to your guns!" The members of the Convention recoiled involuntarily at this order and retreated into the Tuileries; some tried to escape by back doors, but most of them resumed their seats in the theatre. Presently Couthon said, "Citizens, all members of the Convention must now be reassured as to their liberty. . . . Now that you *know* yourselves to be free in your deliberations I shall not ask for an immediate decree of accusation against 'the Twenty-Two,' but merely that the Convention decree that they

shall be arrested in their own homes." Whereupon a Girondin was heard to cry out, "Give Couthon his glass of blood; he is thirsty!"

And who were the Twenty-Two? The Convention listened breathlessly for their names. Marat mouthed them out:<sup>1</sup> Gensonné, Guadet, Brissot, Pétion, Vergniaud, Barbaroux, Buzot, Rabaut Saint-Etienne, Lanjuinais, Louvet, Le Brun, Clavières, Gorsas, Salles, Chambon, Birotteau, Lidon, Lasource, Grangeneuve, Lehardy, Le Sage, Valazé. There was not a man among them who had not helped the Revolution. The Mountain voted the decree for their arrest as well as that of the Committee of Twelve; the rest of the members looked on. On learning that the Assembly had spewed out these good men the people in the Carrousel howled with delight; Hanriot and his guns disappeared, members once more could come and go as they pleased, but Representative Government was at an end in France.

<sup>1</sup> Madelin, *La Révolution Française*, p. 305.

## CHAPTER XVII

### PRISON LIFE

“L’amour est un temple que bâtit celui qui aime à un objet plus ou moins digne de son culte, et ce qu’il y a de plus beau dans cela ce n’est pas tant le Dieu que l’autel.”—*Correspondance*, GEORGE SAND.

THE building in which Madame Roland found herself imprisoned was the Abbey of Saint Germain des Près, a solid four-square erection, the windows of which were heavily barred. The associations connected with this place were grim enough, for it had been the principal scene of the September massacres. Madame Roland, however, did not choose to let her mind dwell on such matters, and after having breakfasted she asked permission to write a few letters. First, in response to Grandpré’s advice, she indited a haughty missive of protest against arrest to the Convention; and then writing to her friend Bosc, who she felt might convey news of her arrest to Roland, she said: “I am well lodged here so long as God wills. Here as elsewhere I am on good enough terms with myself not to suffer change. There is no human power which can deprive a strong, sane soul of the kind of harmony that sustains it above all things that may happen.”

Madame Roland had arrived at the prison, as we know, at half-past seven on a fine Sunday morning,



and by ten o'clock she was installed in her own private room. It had a small double-grilled window, a fireplace and rather grimy walls. The bed, though curtainless, was none too bad, and after all it was something to be alone. Having written her letters and unpacked her clothes, she, being extremely weary from having only had an hour's sleep the night before, went straight to bed. The next morning when Grandpré came to inquire after her she was still in bed. It was most distressing to this kind man to see his benefactress in gaol, and he asked her with tears in his eyes how she had slept. She assured him that in spite of being disturbed frequently by extraordinary noises she had managed to sleep a good deal. She fancied she had heard the tocsin ring that morning: could it be a signal, she wondered, for a new massacre? If it were so, she intended to stay where she was and be killed in her bed, as she really felt too tired for further exertions. Grandpré brought her back the letter she had addressed to the Convention the previous day, saying that he and Champagneux thought it required softening down, otherwise it would stand no chance of being read in the Assembly. He also suggested she should write a line to Garat, the Minister of the Interior—a covering note, as it were, to her official protest. This she did, and Grandpré went off to try once more to save her. In the protest she alleged that her detention was illegal because she had been arrested on a warrant embodying no charge, issued by an authority which had no power to issue warrants, and to crown everything the warrant had been served

on her by night. She demanded to be examined instantly, as by law the examination of an arrested person must take place within twenty-four hours of arrest. Grandpré tried for eight consecutive hours to get this protest listened to in the Convention, but with no success.

At midday the prisoner, feeling more rested, got up and dressed, and then began to arrange her hair. Two big hairpins pushed into a chink in the wall formed pegs for her clothes. She covered the only table with a white cloth and placed it near the light. It was to be her bureau, and she determined to eat her food off the corner of the mantelpiece so as not to disorder the work-table, which had already taken on a literary air by virtue of the volume of Thomson's *Seasons* reposing on it. A list of the books she meant to procure for reading in gaol was next made, and she could not help smiling a little to herself while making it, because of all the noise of drums and bells that were sounding in her ears. It might quite well mean that she would never have time for reading Plutarch, Tacitus or "Mistress Macaulay" again. Before she had finished compiling the book list, the concierge's wife fetched her to have dinner in her own apartment, and there she found her servant, Marguerite Fleury, with whom she was able to have a talk about Eudora, who had been safely removed by Bosc from the rue la Harpe to the care of his friend Madame Creuzé-Latouche. Soon after getting back to her cell, Madame Roland was warned that she was to be transferred to a yet smaller apartment, as new prisoners were arriving the next day. So she took

down her big hairpins and gathered her possessions together, and awaited the summons to move. The new cell was not so pleasant as the old, and as far as she could make out its window was just above a sentry-box, for at intervals all through the night she heard "*Qui vive? Tue! Brigadier! Patrouille!*" Sleep was almost impossible, so she got up early, washed herself, made her bed, and then waited impatiently for the bolts of her door to be drawn. She was longing for the newspaper. When it at last arrived she learnt that the Twenty-Two were to be arrested. The paper dropped from her hands as she moaned, "My country is lost!" The *Moniteur*, she found, contained a notice to the effect that the section Beaurepaire, the ward in which she lived, had guaranteed its protection to herself and Roland. This at least was cheering, and she thought it possible that a sectional deputation to the bar of the Assembly might procure her release. She therefore wrote to the section, thanking them for their guarantee and begging that further steps should immediately be taken on her behalf.

She next proceeded to order her meals from the concierge. Roland had cut down the allowance of prisoners from five to two francs a day,<sup>1</sup> and Madame Roland, who determined not to waste scanty private means in supplementing this sum, found it none too large an allowance to live on. In order, however, to have a few pence to give away to those more wretched than herself, she denied herself coffee for breakfast, drinking water

<sup>1</sup> One franc was obligatory for use of bed and furniture, and the rest had to do for fire, light, food.

instead, substituted beer for wine and ate cheap meat once a day ; but, as she rather drolly observes, " When one appears to be severely economical as to one's expenditure one must get it condoned by being generous to others." Madame Roland believed with Jeremy Taylor that always, in every circumstance and phase of life, some virtue may be exercised, and so she in prison practised an extreme austerity of diet so that she might still indulge the luxury of giving.

And at the back of all the courage and the self-denial, the cheerfulness and the resolution, there was a secret source of satisfaction which enabled Madame Roland to esteem outward happenings rather lightly. We are let into this wonderful secret through her prison letters to Buzot ; in them we get a complete reflection of her thoughts, her feelings, her essential condition. It is no exaggeration to say they wring one's heart. Never were love letters penned under more hopeless conditions, and yet the very hopelessness of the conditions impart to the spirit of the writers the freedom and the *élan* of immortality. Everything after all is possible in the light of the end, the fierce blaze of eternity blinds men to ulterior considerations. All through the last months of her life with Roland this woman of thirty-eight had fought down and repressed the earthly side of her passion. She had been true to the letter of her marriage vow, though she had confessed to spiritual disloyalty.

Now at last she was free, released as it were from duty, her gaol became an enchanted country wherein she could weave beautiful visions of idealised



love—visions that could never be translated into terms of actual life. Never in all her ridiculous girlish flirtations had she felt anything that could be recognised as love. Never in her marriage had she known more than a faint and transitory imitation of love, but now, with death staring her in the face, she was able to indulge a passion so pure and so intense as to burn away the indignities and grossness of diurnal existence, and leave her soul and that of her lover burning like white flames in a dark and empty world. Never could this passion be marred by earthly contacts, these two victims ear-marked for death could know no fleshly satisfaction. It is a strange and unique experience to look into the soul of this woman, who for thirteen years had jogged along in a marriage which had been as good or better than most, since Roland was constant and kind, but still a marriage which lacked that fiery, acute, terrific compulsion for which all women secretly long. The vision of her lover filled Madame Roland's cell, the vision of Buzot with his melancholy, beautiful face, his curly hair, his well-cut marble features, his burning eyes, his romantic, unworldly temperament. She sat dreaming of him for hours and hours. What did it matter to her that the walls of her cell were close upon her and very grimy? She did not see them; she only knew this place as a pleasant hermitage in which to dwell and dream upon a thing of unearthly radiancy. The woman, the real palpitating woman, was alive at last; nothing mattered when once she knew herself alive to the fullest extent of her being. It was an extraordinary, uplifting experience.



These letters tell us many things we want to know. They tell us of her state of intense and concentrated feeling, and we know for ourselves that this state disintegrates the world for any human being. It is, after all, a very small thing for a lover to die. The love of a woman for a man and the love of a man for a woman blot out the world—the universe is reduced to vapour. The world was blotted out for Madame Roland. Life and death for her had drawn very close together, almost indistinguishable had they become, as they do when love is present.

The language of the actual letters is old, so old it is hardly worth transcribing; it is the oldest language in the world :

“ I read them again and again. . . . I press them to my heart. . . . I cover them with kisses. . . . You are the only person in the world who can understand that I was not sorry to be arrested. Others admire my courage, they do not know my joys. And so you want to know whether a certain woman will continue to live after you are gone ? . . . What does it signify to me whether I live here or there ? do I not take my heart wherever I go ? . . . the sweetest of all times this time of retreat. . . . Whoever knows how to love as we love carries within him the principle of all great and excellent actions, the price of costly sacrifice, the compensation of all ills. . . . Farewell, man most beloved by the most loving of women . . . *how* you are loved ! ”

This is indeed the language of feeling, and how different it is from the “*Correspondance Amoureuse*” of fourteen years earlier and from the letters of her married life, full of solicitude and tenderness as these often are.

She wrote to Buzot soon after her arrest :

“ I was in a state of the most cruel anguish till I was assured of your escape ;<sup>1</sup> this anguish has been renewed by hearing of your proscription. . . . Continue your generous efforts : Brutus despaired too soon of the salvation of Rome on the field of Philippi. So long as a republican has breath, liberty, energy, he ought, he can be useful. In any case, the South will always be a safe refuge.

“ As for me, I know how to wait equably for the return of justice and how to submit to the last excesses of tyranny in such a way that my example shall not be altogether useless. If I feared anything it was that you might do something rash on my behalf. My friend, it is in saving your country that you save me ; I do not want the latter without the former : I shall die satisfied, in knowing that you really are saving your country. Death, torment, pain, are nothing to me ; I can defy them all. Go on, I shall live to my last hour without wasting a single minute in the trouble of unworthy agitation.”

And then she tells him that though she is in prison her guardians are humane and allow her some comforts and a measure of freedom. Chains stronger than iron prevent her taking advantage of any opportunity to escape—these chains are the trust of her gaoler. By a strange coincidence her cell had just been vacated by another Madame Roland,<sup>2</sup> whose sweet and happy face betrayed a beautiful soul ; with her she had had some talk before she had been carried off to the Conciergerie. Owing to the confusion of name some of Buzot's letters were conveyed to pretty Madame Roland de la Fauchaie in the Conciergerie and never reached

<sup>1</sup> Buzot reached Evreux, June 4.

<sup>2</sup> De la Fauchaie, sister of Desilles, the hero of Nancy.

their real destination at all. It was only a few days after their interview in the prison corridor that she heard that her namesake had perished on the scaffold with great courage. "Courage," as Madame Roland once again said, "had become a habit with women as well as men."

When Sophie Grandchamp went to see Madame Roland at the Abbaye she found her with dancing eyes and high colour, in the best of spirits. She was full of a new scheme for vindicating the Girondin party to posterity. If only she was spared a few weeks of life she could accomplish a more or less complete history of Roland's term of office, of her relations with and impressions of their colleagues and their enemies. She had already begun to write out some "historical notes" as a beginning, and was anxious to get Sophie to smuggle these "notes" out of the prison as they were written and to keep them under her charge. It was a risky thing to do in view of the domiciliary visits to which any house was open, but Sophie agreed to do it, and to call every day at the prison to fetch what had been written in the morning. It was never difficult for influential prisoners to get letters or papers conveyed out of gaol, the difficulty was to find any safe place of deposit, now that at any moment a suspect's house could be searched and seals placed on all drawers, boxes and cupboards. Madame Roland's *Mémoires* had many adventures before they got into print, and some of them unfortunately were destroyed by their timorous custodians.

The only things that disturbed Madame

Roland's gaiety and peace of mind in gaol were receiving a letter of condolence from Pache, reading the lies published in the daily newspapers, and enduring the visits from dirty police officials, who asked irrelevant questions about her health and treatment and seemed to come out of mere curiosity to stare at her. As an example of Press calumnies, the *Thermomètre du Jour* on the 9th of June alluded to secret meetings at the house of Madame Buzot which the Rolands and other Girondists had attended. Madame Roland promptly wrote to the editor protesting against the untruth of this statement, adding that she had been arrested on no charge and had been in gaol a week without interrogation, though by the law it was necessary that a prisoner should be interrogated within twenty-four hours. She begged the editor to publish her original letter of the 2nd of June to the Convention, of which she enclosed a copy, and informed him that up to date it had not been read in that Assembly. Three days later two Commissioners, Louvet and Baudrais, came to the Abbaye to interrogate her. The gist of their examination was as follows :

Did she know of the troubles which had agitated the Republic from the moment Roland had become Minister ? She answered she had never taken part in public affairs, her only knowledge of them was derived from newspapers and conversations.

What does she mean by this negative answer, she must have known more than most ? She answered, that being a woman she did not feel called upon to inquire.

Did she not know that they had sent leaflets

out to the departments to excite them against Paris with the intention of destroying this city ? She answered that she knew nothing about it, but that Roland and all the persons she was in the way of seeing were devoted to principles of liberty and justice and desired the good of Paris and of the Republic as a whole.

The Commissioners observed that the words liberty and justice were equivocal if not joined to *equality*, which should be the basis of a republic. She answered that equality seemed to her mind to be the necessary result of liberty and justice.

Asked what persons she had been in the habit of seeing ? She said old friends and colleagues of Roland.

Asked if she had information of a project for establishing a Federal Republic and thereby breaking up the unity so much desired by good citizens ? She replied that she knew nothing of any project of the kind ; those persons with whom she had come in contact longed for unity and hoped that the balance between the departments would never be upset, and that Paris would do nothing to excite the jealousy of the other departments.

But after all Roland had established " bureaux of public opinion " in the departments, and there was some question of funds being allocated for this purpose, was there not ? Madame Roland thought there was no foundation for the first part of the statement ; as for the second, even the Commissioners must know that money was allocated to the Minister of the Interior to spend on useful literature. His published accounts gave an exact record of the literature paid for as *useful*.



Did she know what the literature was that might have influenced opinion in the departments ? She answered that the titles were to be found in the Balance Sheet posted up in Paris.

Did she know that Roland could not really have rendered his accounts, since just before the last revolution he had begged to be allowed to hand them in formally, so that he might retire when it seemed good to him ? Madame Roland answered that as she could not suspect her questioners of evil intention, she can only see in this last question great ignorance of facts, that Roland had rendered the most exact and detailed accounts to the Convention—that these had been audited and found correct but had never been passed. She then praised Roland's integrity.

The Commissioners asked if she knew where he was at the moment. She was able with perfect truth to say she did not know.

Amongst the people she saw habitually were there not friends of Dumouriez ? As far as she was aware, she knew none of Dumouriez' intimates.

Asked whether she knew of a plan to overthrow popular societies, she answered "No." Madame Roland then attested the truth of the cross-examination with her signature, which was endorsed by her two interrogators, Louvet and Baudrais. This is the report of the interrogation as it has come down to us. There was but little evidence against her at this time, certainly not enough to endanger her life, nor indeed her liberty ; and it was not till her friend Duperret's papers were seized that it became possible for any tribunal to convict her. When the Duperret papers came to light, she was

accused of treason, and of co-operating with the rebels of Calvados.

A week later, Madame Roland read an interview in Hébert's paper purporting to be the report of a conversation between herself and *Père Duchesne*.

*Père Duchesne*<sup>1</sup> interviews the toothless hag in gaol and extracts information from her about the counter-revolution worked up by the Brissotins, Girondins, Buzotins, Pétionistes, in conjunction with the brigands of La Vendée and Royalist plotters of England.

"Madame Coco," as Madame Roland is sometimes designated, "flattens her plaster face against the bars in the hope of seeing some one she knows coming in to the prison." When she saw *Père Duchesne* she said in a trembling voice, "Who is this prisoner?" He said he was the chief of the brigands in La Vendée, whereupon she was delighted and asked whether they had really beaten the Republican Army and taken its cannon. He said "Yes," and gave an absurd account of the fight and of his being taken prisoner. Queen Coco is sorry for him, since she had no hopes save in people like himself or in help from Coblenz, England or such like. She is supposed to talk of "little Louvet, my heart's friend," and of "divine Barbaroux." The visit concludes with *Père Duchesne* insulting Madame Coco and assuring her that all the departments will soon be *de-brissotés* and *derolandisés*. Madame Roland naturally found this sort of thing was very disgusting to read, and quite impossible to meet or to suppress. The methods of the gutter press

<sup>1</sup> Extract from No. 248 of *Père Duchesne*, June 20, 1793.

were to discredit those whom it wished to destroy, so that no pity might be shown for their fate.

On the 24th of June Madame Roland was suddenly released from the Abbaye by order of the Commune. She was sure that her letters of protest against illegal imprisonment and her frank replies to the Commissioners were the cause of this unexpected action on the part of the authorities. It was a triumph to best the Commune thus, and feeling particularly self-satisfied Madame Roland did not hurry to leave the prison. She put her few belongings together leisurely in her cell, that cell which was in sad succession to be the lodging of Brissot, of Charlotte Corday and of Fauchet, and, then ordering a cab, drove home. Little did she guess the real reason for her release, a reason that Sophie Grandchamp had been told of the day before by Grandpré, which was that since Brissot <sup>1</sup> was to go to the Abbaye on the 23rd of June a cell must be found elsewhere for his friend Madame Roland, for it would never do for them to meet and hatch new plots against the State. When Madame Roland dismounted from her cab at her own home she gaily greeted the concierge and ran upstairs. Her foot was on the fourth stair when two men behind her shouted: "Citizeness Roland!" "What do you want?" she answered, with no suspicion of their business. "In the name of the law we arrest you," came the grim reply. The Commune had taken care no illegality should be committed this time: the warrant was delivered

<sup>1</sup> Having no money June 1 he could only escape from Paris June 4, and was arrested June 10 at Moulins. Pétion, by the help of Madame Goussaud, left Paris June 23.

in broad daylight and it embodied a charge. Madame Roland asked that the warrant might be read aloud to her, and then hurried across the courtyard to the room of her landlord Cauchois.<sup>1</sup> Then, relying on the sympathy of her own section Beaurepaire, which had already guaranteed her its protection, she sent for the sectional police, who drew up a protest on her behalf against the action of the Commune and begged "Madame" to go with them to the Mairie. This "Madame" did, and found herself set down to wait in an antechamber. Made impatient by the delay, she presently opened the door into the Court, saying, "Gentlemen, I may as well assist you, as I am the object of the discussion." Commissioner Louvet shouted "Go away!" but she went on speaking, and then they all shouted, "Police!" whereupon she withdrew. A few moments later she was requested to step into a cab and was driven off to Sainte Pélagie, the prostitutes' gaol, and there she was locked up as "*femme suspecte aux termes de la loi.*" The description of the prisoner entered on the register that day was: "Height five feet, hair and eyebrows dark chestnut, brown eyes, medium nose, ordinary mouth, oval face, round chin, large forehead." Her crime was elaborated into "suspicion of complicity with her husband," "the notoriety of her liaisons with conspirators against liberty," and "the uproar which is rising against her."

When Sophie Grandchamp, who flew round to

<sup>1</sup> Cauchois was guillotined, March 15, 1794, for the part he played. Fouquier-Tinville cried out at his trial, "Est-ce un patriote qui a pu aider à faire mettre Roland sous la protection de son section?"



see Manon in her new prison, told her how narrowly she had missed meeting Brissot at the Abbaye, the poor prisoner quite broke down; it was a great blow missing Brissot, and a desperate disappointment to be re-arrested. However, she quickly recovered herself, and owing to the influence of Grandpré was lodged in comparative comfort in her new prison. The gaoler went so far as to allow Madame Grandchamp to provide a piano for Madame Roland in his own rooms, as well as occasionally to stay in them for the night. Books and drawing materials were also supplied by kind Sophie, who went every day after luncheon to see her friend. As Madame Roland herself tells us, she really began to lead the same life she led at home. Her room, of course, is darker, smellier, noisier, smaller, but she has Tacitus, Plutarch, Thomson, and she is able to write down her thoughts—in fact, she is making notes which she thinks “will amuse people very much one of these days.” Bosc kept her cell well supplied with flowers from the *Jardin des Plantes*, and so it came to be known in the prison as the “*Pavillon de Flore*.” People were extraordinarily kind and brave, and her old school friend, Henriette Cannet, came and offered to change clothes and places with her. Sœur Sainte Agathe also came and talked with her.

According to Sophie Grandchamp Madame Roland picked up health and strength at Sainte Pélagie, and was most cheerful and happy. She talked a great deal about the departmental risings and about the deputies in Calvados—these were her chief concern. Plenty of news filtered in from the outer world. Champagneux, Bosc, Vallée,



Henriette Cannet, Madame Goussaud, Chauveau Lagarde, her own servants and others were all bearers of letters and newspapers, and up till the beginning of July M. Duperret, deputy for Bouches du Rhône, was a most valuable intermediary for correspondence between the prisoner and Buzot. Through him she received several letters from Barbaroux as well as from her lover, and it was through him that she heard how some of the proscribed deputies were at Caen planning a new revolution. According to M. Duperret, the response in the departments to their propaganda was not very eager though it was widespread.

Every one who came to see the prisoner was watched; all her friends became more or less suspected. One by one they were destined to disappear, some as prisoners, some as exiles from Paris.

On the 24th of June Madame Roland had sent the report of her "Interrogation" to M. Duperret, begging him to get it published in Dulaure's journal, the *Thermomètre du Jour*. This to her mind had been made necessary by the article in the *Père Duchesne* of the 20th of June, in which she had been so scurrilously attacked. And again on the evening of the same day she found herself obliged once more to write to Duperret, this time from the rue de la Harpe, stating that she had just been re-arrested, and was about to be taken to Sainte Pélagie. She put great faith in his ability and power to help. Duperret replied saying he would do all in his power to prevent injustice being done her, and added that he has a letter from "Bar" and two from "Bu,"

which he can find no way of sending to her. He also told her that Pétion had made good his escape from Paris, and that from his own correspondence he finds that the Girondins are more concerned with her sufferings than with their own dangerous case.

A fortnight later faithful M. Duperret was arrested on suspicion of carrying on treasonable correspondence with the rebels of Calvados. His papers were seized, and such letters from Madame Roland as were found amongst them formed the material for the final act of accusation against her.

In response to the letter Madame Roland sent by Grandpré to Garat, immediately after her original arrest, he, in his capacity of Minister of the Interior, had made some formal representations to the Committee of Public Safety on Madame Roland's behalf. These representations elicited an official reply couched in the strange official style in vogue at the moment:<sup>1</sup> "Citizen Minister, the Committee of Public Safety authorised the arrest of Madame Roland because of the escape of her husband (who at this moment fans the flame of civil war in the department of the Rhone and Loire), and because of the complicity of this pretended Lucretia, with her pretended virtuous husband, in the project of perverting the public spirit by a bureau of information of the said spirit. As the trial will be one of conspiracy, Citizeness Roland will be good enough to await the general report which will have to be drawn up, *after* we

<sup>1</sup> Dated July 1 and signed by Chabot and Legrand from the *Comité de Surêté Générale*.

have righted our finances by a great scheme, and have anchored the Constitution by means of National Education and the simplification of the Code.”

Garat sent this missive on to the prisoner. There was not much comfort to be extracted from it, nevertheless Madame Roland forwarded it to the section Beaurepaire for consideration.

She found Sainte Pélagie was not so pleasant a resort as the Abbaye; prisoners were more closely watched there, for one thing, and it was not possible to write freely or to keep letters or papers there for more than an hour or two for fear of their being seized. Then again, she found it difficult either to get accustomed to or to close her ears to the obscene conversations of the prostitutes who loitered all day in the passage outside her door. The women themselves seemed lost to shame, and their words contaminated the air. The only remedy was to stay a great deal in her cell, to spend much time in reading English, in drawing, in meditating and above all in *feeling*. For the first week of her life at Sainte Pélagie she was without news of Buzot, so she got her servant to bring his miniature to the prison; hitherto, for superstitious reasons, she had not chosen to put even his picture in such a place as a gaol. Now she threads it on black velvet and hangs it round her neck. It seemed to bring luck, for the following day<sup>1</sup> a letter came, to which she at once replied: “Do you know of any greater advantage than that of being superior to adversity, to death, and to find in one’s own heart something to savour and beautify life till

<sup>1</sup> July 3.

the last breath ? ” Their attachment to each other at least gives them this wonderful something. She is pleased and happy in her captivity. Without him she would of course have endured imprisonment with dignity ; he renders it most sweet and dear. Men think to overwhelm her by giving her chains.

“ The idiots ! what does it matter living here or there ? Do I not go everywhere with my heart, and being straitened in a prison, is it not giving myself up altogether to my heart ? My own company is what I like. . . . My duties now that I am alone are limited to vows for all that is just and true. . . . I know too well what is imposed on me by the ordinary course of things to make complaint of the violence which has upset that course. If I have to die . . . well ! I know the best that life contains, and its length would perhaps only oblige me to new sacrifices. The moment in which I most gloried in my own existence, that in which I felt most vividly the exaltation of soul which dares all dangers, and applauds itself for encountering them, was the one in which I entered the Bastille which my executioners had chosen for me. . . . ”

She explained to Buzot that she had thought, on her arrest, that the courage and firmness she was able to display might serve Roland's cause : “ I found it delicious to continue being useful to Roland and combine with it a way of life that left me to you. I should love to sacrifice my life to him in order to acquire the right of giving you my last sigh.”

“ Except for my horrible anxiety over the decree against the proscribed deputies I have never enjoyed a greater peace than in this strange situation, and I enjoyed it completely when I knew they were nearly all in safety, when I saw

you were free and working to preserve the liberty of your country."

Letters were sometimes brought to her by an occasional visitor to the gaol, Madame Goussaud. One day this lady took two letters out of her bodice, they happened to be from Buzot. Madame Roland could not read them in Madame Goussaud's presence, and found the length of the poor kind woman's visit immense. And then of one of these letters she says "it is the manifestation of a proud free soul, occupied with great schemes, superior to destiny, capable of the most generous resolutions, of the most sustained efforts. I found my friend once more; I revived all the sentiments which bind me to him." Of the other letter: "... how sad it is! What dark thoughts end it. And so it is a question of knowing whether a certain woman survives you or not? The real question is to preserve your own life, and make it useful to our country; the rest can wait."

On the 6th of July she received at the hands of Deputy Vallée,<sup>1</sup> a friend of Buzot's, two letters from her lover of the 30th of June and 1st of July. It looks as if he wrote to her every day, but if he did so, many and many a letter miscarried and fell into the hands of Government spies.

Again she could not open the letters in Vallée's presence, any more than she could in Madame Goussaud's. "One does not read a friend before a third person whoever he may be, even if he knows of what he is a bearer. Vallée's attachment to you, his devotion to the good cause, his

<sup>1</sup> Deputy from Eure and one of the most active intermediaries between Girondins at Caen and their colleagues detained in Paris.



gentleness and honesty, made me entertain him for some time with pleasure, though I had your packet in my pocket, and that is assuredly saying a good deal." Buzot is afraid that her new prison may be most horrible, as of course he knew the purpose it usually served. She begs him not to worry, for all is well; "it is only a question of waiting. This waiting is not painful to me; the sweetest time I have had for six months is that of this retreat. . . ." There is no hurry, she tells him, about leaving the chains with which persecution has honoured her in order to resume others which no one sees and which cannot be escaped.

Buzot longs to know whether she will have to appear before the Revolutionary Tribunal. She answers that it may be possible, but that in any case she does not fear. Since she has learnt that the great conspiracy trial of the Thirty-Two<sup>1</sup> is to come off soon, it seems almost certain that she must be involved in it, either as witness or additional victim. Then going back to personal questions—the only questions that count with lovers—she says :

"Four days ago I had your 'dear picture' fetched for me. For superstitious reasons I had not brought it to prison; but why should I deny myself this dear image, faint and precious compensation for the absence of the object? Hidden from all eyes it lies on my heart, which is at all times full; it is often bathed in tears. . . . Whoever knows how to love as we love carries within himself the principle of the greatest and most excellent actions, the price of the most painful sacrifices, the compensation for all ills. Good-bye, beloved; good-bye. You will never be able to imagine the charm of a prison in which one

<sup>1</sup> The Twenty-Two plus the Twelve, reduced by flight to Thirty Two.

only has to account to one's own heart for the employment of each moment! No irritating distraction, no painful sacrifice, no fastidious care; none of those duties which are the stricter for being respected by an honest heart, none of the contradictions of law or the prejudices of society, no stifling of the sweetest inspirations of nature, no watchful jealousy for the expression of what one is going through or for the occupation one has chosen; no one suffers for one's melancholy or inaction, no one expects efforts to be made, no one exacts sentiments which are out of one's control. Delivered up to oneself, to truth, without difficulties to cope with, fights to sustain, one can without injuring the rights or affections of any one abandon one's soul to its proper rectitude; find once more in the bosom of an apparent captivity one's moral independence, and exercise it with a fulness which social relations almost always dry up. It was not permitted to me to seek this independence and thus to discharge myself of the burden of another's happiness—a happiness I found it so difficult to make: events have given me what I never could have procured for myself without a sort of crime. How I cherish fetters in which I am free to love you and think of you without end! Here every other obligation is suspended. I do not wish to inquire into the designs of Providence; I will not allow myself to formulate guilty vows; but I thank Heaven for substituting my present chains for those which I wore before, and this very change appears to me the beginning of favour. If Heaven accords me no more, may it keep me in this situation until my ultimate deliverance from a world abandoned to injustice and misfortune. You have made beautiful this sad resort, you have diffused into this place all the happiness that those who dwell in palaces sometimes long for in vain.”

Of all the prisoners of the Revolution Madame Roland alone was happy, and happy in a way that freedom had never made her happy.

A letter from Buzot of the 3rd of July expresses anxiety as to Manon's silence. She explains it by saying that she can keep no paper, that she is always watched, that she has no one at the moment to whom she can entrust letters. Fear for her lover's safety made her express deep disapproval of the armed rising which Buzot wishes to provoke. Representations as to changes of Government should in her opinion be made either by petition on paper or by word of mouth in the Assembly. Buzot should remember that he is a deputy, that it is a question of the public good and not of what any individual brave man is pleased to do ; and she reminds him that on all occasions, in all difficult situations, there are always too few heads and always too many arms. In everything it is the same, and supposing the people do rise, surely it is not for a deputy to lead them ? However, if his colleagues have agreed that an insurrection is the only course to pursue, he must of course act with them. And above all, if they decide to march on Paris, they must make certain of the co-operation of the armed sections within the city—otherwise their attempt must be a complete failure.

Once more she leaves public affairs on one side, sinks back upon happiness and abandons herself to dreams of love. She tells her lover that there is no cause for pity, that she has everything that matters. She can obtain money from her landlady ; Bosc is her security for that, and anyway there is a sum of from eight to ten thousand francs locked up in her bureau in the flat, which will be available one day. As it

interests Buzot to know everything about her, she tells him at first she had tried to conform to the two-franc régime for prisoners arranged by the State :

“ I found pleasure in exercising that control which one ought to have over oneself in the diminution of one’s needs and the means of doing good to those more unhappy than myself. My physical strength, however, does not equal my other strength, and so I have had to abandon my enterprise. The air is better here than at Abbaye, and I can go whenever I like into the concierge’s charming room. It is there that I am able to receive the very small number of people who may visit me ; but to go there one has to cross the building under the eyes of the gaolers, and of certain vile women who wander about close to me. I nearly always stay in my own cell. It is large enough to have a chair beside the bed. And there in front of a little table I read, draw, write ; there, with your portrait on my heart or before my eyes, I thank Heaven for having known you, you who have taught me the inexpressible goodness of loving and of being cherished, with a generosity, a delicacy, for ever unknowable to vulgar souls, and which is above all other pleasures. Flowers sent me by Bosc from the *Jardin des Plantes* decorate this austere retreat, expand their happy forms and perfume the room with sweetest odours. A poor prisoner, my neighbour, renders me services which are a help in my weakness, and of which the pay is not less useful to her poverty. This is my life.

“ But you know you speak very casually of the sacrifice of yours, and you seem to have resolved upon it quite independently of me. How would you have me look on this ? Has it been ordained that we can only deserve each other in losing each other ? And if Fate does not re-unite us soon, must we abandon all hope of ever meeting, and look forward to nothing but the tomb, in which our elements may mingle ? ”

A curtain of silence fell between Madame Roland and her friends in Calvados. Between the 7th July and the end of August no letters came, no messages were brought. One by one the letter-carriers and messengers disappeared. Madame Goussaud went to join the fugitive Pétion in Normandy, Duperret was incarcerated, Vallée arrested, Champagneux imprisoned as "*l'ame dammé de Roland*." It was impossible for her to hold any communication with the proscribed deputies in Calvados — to know even whether they were alive or dead. And so for the moment we will leave her, scribbling away at her *Mémoires* and thinking her own thoughts, while we look outside the walls of Paris to see what was really happening to those Girondins who still remained at liberty.



## CHAPTER XVIII

### REBELLION

“Oh ! les tours d’ivoire montons y donc, en rêve puisque les clous de nos bottes nous retiennent ici bas.”—*Correspondance*, FLAUBERT.

THE action of the Assembly on the 2nd of June in proscribing certain amongst its members was viewed with the greatest indignation in many of the departments of France, more especially in those places whose members had been the actual victims of the proscription, such as Marseilles, Bordeaux and Evreux. Seventy departments lodged formal protests against the action of the Assembly, and twenty among them hoisted the flag of rebellion. Lyons, which had been warned by Champagneux and Madame Roland as to the trend of events in the capital, had not waited for the 2nd of June. The previous attempts of the Paris Commune to override and coerce the House of National Representatives had sufficed to provoke the Lyons Commune to judge and execute their Mayor ; and when Lindet was dispatched by the Convention to inquire into the murder, the Town Council refused to recognise the authority of the National Assembly until it was once more “ a whole,” that is to say, until it had rescinded the decree of the 2nd of June by which a part of its members had been placed under arrest.

Marseilles rose after the 2nd of June, and

through Avignon, stretched out a hand to Lyons; but it was above all Bordeaux, the country of the Gironde proper, of Vergniaud, Gensonné, Guadet, that seemed to be the natural rallying-point of the new movement. Dauphiné and Franche Comté meant to fight, and so did the towns of Nantes and Brest. Buzot had managed to raise Normandy, and it seemed possible that the departments of the west and south might succeed in enveloping Paris in an unfriendly and coercive embrace, if only efficient co-operation between them could be organised in time. Madame Roland, who knew something about the original planning of this rebellion, which had been sketched out among the yellow velvet chairs and sofas of her flat in the rue de la Harpe, had her misgivings as to the capacity of her friends for carrying it out efficiently. In her *Mémoires* she writes affectionately of Louvet and of Barbaroux, and then adds: "When I remember the serenity of Pétion, the amiable and transitory effervescence of Guadet, I fear that these honest men, there as here, spend the time they should consecrate to achieving the public good, in merely dreaming it." She goes on to say, "They were no good at all as leaders, and the circumstances called for very good leading." Buzot himself made a fatal mistake in trying to make his own constituency, Evreux, not Bordeaux, the centre of hostilities. It was as if a commander fought a battle, not from some central position whence he could control the whole, but from the extremity of a wing. Feeling certainly ran very high in Normandy, and, owing to the influence of Guadet, Buzot and Barbaroux,

"*l'Assemblée des Départements réunis*," intended as a rival of the Convention, was convoked at Caen for 13th June. Gorsas spoke in this Assembly on the 26th, and was followed by Guadet and Louvet. Pétion, on the 28th, congratulated the members on the character and courage they had developed in this time of terror. He begged them to make themselves into a truly representative National Assembly, and to work for the dissolution of the Paris Convention, which had proved itself in no sense representative of the real feeling of the nation. On the 30th, Lanjuinais addressed an enthusiastic audience in a similar strain. Barbaroux, Salles, Valady and Duchatel, who had all managed to reach Caen safely, also took part in the deliberations of this Assembly.<sup>1</sup> The enthusiasm provoked by these speakers was intense, and the great-niece of Corneille, Charlotte Corday, was inspired by it to go alone from Caen to Paris to kill "Marat the tyrannicide."<sup>2</sup>

In organising an armed force to march on Paris, Buzot and his friends found themselves in an equivocal position. It was quite easy to raise men to fight against the hated Convention, but it was impossible to sift their motives for enlisting. Royalists and champions of clericalism flocked to the Girondin standard, and so, from the beginning, the cause of liberal government, for which the proscribed deputies were ready to die, was blurred and tarnished by other issues. This confusion of causes and jumble of forces served the Convention well, and was naturally the reason of much

<sup>1</sup> *Bulletins des autorités constituées réunis à Caen.*

<sup>2</sup> July 13.

quarrelling among the insurgent departments. Brest and Nantes, Girondin cities, for example, refused to co-operate with Royalist Vendée. Serving under the Republican Wimpfen in Normandy was to be found Puisaye, a Royalist soldier; while at Lyons, Précý and Virieu, Girondin sympathisers were led by Royalists. At Toulon the insurgents called for the English Fleet and acclaimed Louis xvii. The very successes of the *Blancs* of La Vendée (they having taken Saumur and Angers and being before Nantes) revived the opposition of the *Bleus* in the west.<sup>1</sup> Republican departments paused before committing themselves to the Girondin cause, and hunted about for a pretext to reconcile themselves to the Convention; for in these departments it was felt that Royalism must be crushed at any price, even at that of abandoning the championship of liberal government and the doctrine of the inviolability of the deputy.

The Convention obliged these wavering departments by voting at tremendous speed the Constitution of 1793.<sup>2</sup> Héroult de Sechelles was the editor of this production, which formed a golden bridge for dissentients, since incorporated in the new Constitution were some wonder-working "democratic guarantees." Under Héroult's scheme the Legislative Assembly was to be elected annually, there was to be universal suffrage as well as the referendum, and all these good things were to be arranged for by a plebiscite which alone could make the Constitution operative.<sup>3</sup> It was

<sup>1</sup> L. Madelin, *Rév. Fr.*, p. 309.

<sup>2</sup> June 24.

<sup>3</sup> L. Madelin, *Rév. Fr.*, p. 310.

clearly impossible, as Hérault pointed out, to devise an Assembly in theory more amenable to complete popular control. Each member of the Assembly hurriedly travelled off to assure his constituents that the democratic provisions must make for general happiness, and that once this new Constitution had been adopted the mission of the much-abused and long-suffering Convention would be accomplished, and it would be replaced by a new Legislature. On receiving this assurance many of the departments which would have joined in the Girondin rising calmed down, and formally adopted the new Constitution. Ten departments alone remained hostile to it, but since the majority had approved the scheme, it was said to be adopted by the country, and therefore was engrossed and deposited in a casket in the middle of the National Assembly. For various reasons it was never applied,—as Barère said, “*Cette crèche fut son tombeau,*”—but it accomplished its object, the partial pacification of France.

The approval of the new Constitution by Eure and Calvados was the real death-blow of Girondism, for it meant that the country that had hitherto sheltered and supported Buzot, Guadet, Pétion and Barbaroux, had abandoned them, and these wretched deputies had to fly for their lives to the coast of the Gironde, only to learn that Bordeaux had opened its gates to the Convention and that Tallien and Isabeau were there inaugurating the Terror.

As early as the 28th of July Buzot and his friends were in hiding near Quimper. The backbone of Girondin resistance had been quietly



broken by the new Constitution, and it only remained for the Conventional troops to crush the rebels in detail and at their leisure, for there was no further reason for the Government to fear any great combined movement on Paris.

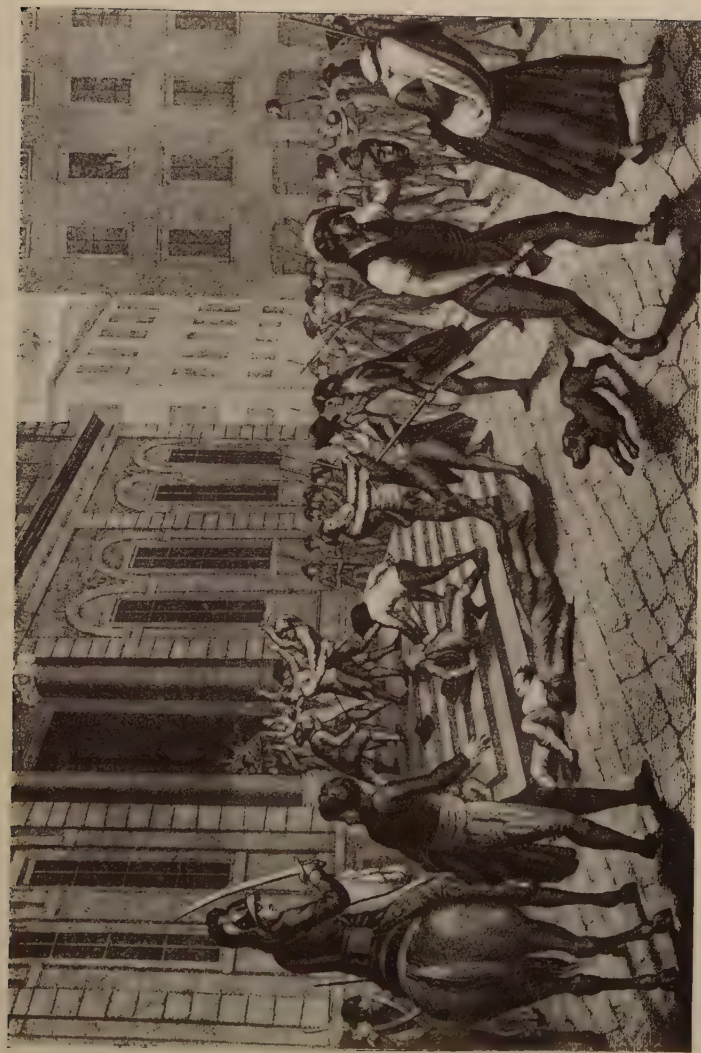
Isolated Marseilles was entered by Conventional troops on August the 25th, and Fréron and Barras were installed there to teach "respect for the Convention." Toulon also held out, but fearing for its fate if entered by Fréron, gave itself up to the English on August the 28th. Lyons remained obdurate till October the 8th, and then was the scene of a terrible vengeance. On the 12th of October the Convention unanimously passed the following resolutions: "The town of Lyons shall be destroyed. . . . The name of Lyons shall be effaced from the list of the cities of the Republic. The group of houses that remain shall henceforth be called the town of emancipation. On the ruins of Lyons a column shall be set up which will remind posterity of the crimes and punishments of the Royalists of this town. The inscription thereon shall be: 'Lyons made war upon Liberty: Lyons is no more.'" By drastic measures of this sort the rebellion, known to contemporary history as that of federalism and counter-revolution, was suppressed by October, and the subsequent execution of the Girondin members was the last official word on the subject.

Having glanced at the poor fugitive Girondins wandering about the country all through the sultry August of 1792, we may take leave of them in order to go back to Paris to observe the steady extermination of so-called "counter-

revolutionaries," carried on by the Revolutionary Tribunal under the presidency of Montané and Fouquier-Tinville. From April till the end of October a victim went to the guillotine every second day, or in the language of Amar, the public prosecutor, "the Red Mass was celebrated at the country's altar." Madame Roland watched daily in her cell for the names of those arrested as suspects and of those who suffered death. On the 14th of July she read of her kind friend Duperret's imprisonment and the seizure of all his papers, on the 30th of July of Vallée's arrest, on 4th August of Champagneux's incarceration. In a strange kind of way she seems to have got beyond feeling pity for these people. They were doomed to die; and the same curious indifference came over her that comes over so many people in time of war. They seem to become fatalists, and acquiesce without apparent regret in the slaughter of men in the pride of life and the beauty and heroism of youth.

The arrest of Champagneux was most unfortunate, as he was the keeper of her manuscripts, those manuscripts which were to justify the Gironde in the eyes of posterity. All she had written during June and July, "enough for a volume," were in his keeping under the title *Notices historiques*. Champagneux set high value on his friend's work, but when he found he too had been denounced in the Convention<sup>1</sup> he hurriedly burned such papers as he could, including the *Notices historiques*. This precaution probably saved his skin and temporarily that of his friend, but as Madame Roland with

<sup>1</sup> By Collot d'Herbois, August 2, imprisoned August 4.



THE MASSACRE AT LYONS ORDERED BY COLLOT D'HERBOIS, 1793

*From an original by Dertaux*



a most uncertain span of life before her says : “ I would have preferred that he should throw *me* into the fire . . . but as one should succumb to nothing, I shall use what leisure remains to me by just throwing down on paper anything that comes into my head. These notes will not make up for what I have lost, but they will be the shreds that will serve to remind me of the *Notices*, and will one day enable me to supplement them if the faculty is left me.” A little later on she learnt that about a third of the papers in Champagneux’s keeping had been saved from destruction.

On the 9th of August, the day after she had heard of the burning of her manuscripts, she, with quite admirable courage and persistence, began a new series of recollections, the *Mémoires particulières*. By dint of working at extraordinary speed by the 31st of August she had finished the *Seconde Arrestation, Portraits et Anecdotes*. On the envelope containing this manuscript she wrote : “ I close this work on the 31st of August under the title of *Portraits et Anecdotes*, done in haste as material to replace what was lost. I also finish the first three numbers of my *Mémoires*.<sup>1</sup> I am very much astonished to have written about 300 pages in twenty-two days, in the moments in which my mind was free, especially as I gave up much time to rest, to reverie, to the forte-piano, and, ever since the arrival of Madame Pétion, to society. What may one not accomplish by just going on ! ” Madame Talma, with what one knows not what amount of accuracy, says that Madame Roland sometimes played the piano all night “ in such a

<sup>1</sup> *Mémoires particulières*.



strange and frightening manner that she would never forget the sound of it."

Madame Pétion and her boy had arrived at Sainte Pélagie on the 9th of August; Madame Brissot had been there since the 7th of July, and these women spent many hours together discussing the ephemeral joys of office, the character of their enemies and the fortunes of their friends and husbands. Of these husbands, Pétion was an outlaw wandering in the fields and forests of Normandy; Brissot was engaoled at the Abbaye, and Roland safely lodged with his old friends the demoiselles Malortie at Rouen. Madame Roland received letters from her husband regularly through the agency of Bosc. She knew that after his escape from Paris he had sheltered for a few days at the Priory of Sainte Radégonde in the forest of Montmorency, a small church property that Bosc had bought on Bancal's behalf; that after leaving the Priory he had gone for a few days to Amiens and thence to Rouen, where he spent his time evolving schemes for his wife's escape and writing memoirs in which he proposed to deliver Buzot up "to public execration." Madame Roland had no anxieties about him as had poor Madame Pétion and Madame Brissot about their husbands. Roland at least was for the time being safe.

It was not till the 5th of September that Madame Roland had an opportunity of smuggling her newly completed manuscript out of prison. Paris was exasperated that day by the news that Toulon had been given up to the English, and prisoners learnt with dismay that new powers had

been immediately granted to the Revolutionary Tribunal, and that as a consequence "terror had become the order of the day." Madame Roland added a last word to her manuscript before handing it over to Sophie Grandchamp. "I cut this copy-book in half so as to place what is written in it in the little box; for when I see a revolutionary army decreed, and new tribunals set up, famine threatening and tyrants in full cry, I tell myself they will make new victims, and that no one is sure of living twenty-four hours."

"The little box" containing the manuscript was carried off to the Priory of Sainte Radégonde concealed in a beam above the door there, and later, when the Terror was overpast, its contents were edited and published by Bosc.

On the last day of August Madame Roland somehow or another received a letter from Buzot and was able to dispatch her last letter to him. She tells him that Champagneux has destroyed her *Mémoires*, but that she is not cast down and is busy making them good; she also tells him that Roland, in obedience to her dying request—"it is only a question of weeks or months," she feels—has burnt the bitter Memoirs which she fears may sully the fair name of her lover. She begs Buzot to go to America. But she does not inform him that she has tried to get money out of her husband in order to help him to get there, and that long-suffering Roland had very naturally refused to help preserve what to him appeared "so worthless a life."

Early in September Madame Roland was joined by some fellow-prisoners, who made existence very unpleasant, the actresses of the Théâtre

Français who had been arrested while playing "Pamela." The male actors were sent to the Madelonnettes and the women to Sainte Pélagie. They occupied the hall in front of Madame Roland's door and made a tremendous noise there, singing, laughing and entertaining friends. Great licence was allowed them, whereas none at all was permitted to Madame Roland; she could not even go to the concierge's room. Her gaolers had suddenly become much stricter, for she was suspected of treasonable correspondence with the rebels of the west. Under the strain of close confinement her spirits sank, her health suffered, the smell in her cell was very unpleasant, for the drainage of Sainte Pélagie was more than questionable. The indecent behaviour of the actresses caused such scandal to all respectable prisoners that they were shortly removed to some other place and comparative peace reigned again at Sainte Pélagie. Even prison life had its lighter moments, for on the 11th of September we find Madame Roland writing a joking letter to poor M. Montané,<sup>1</sup> whose wife had been sent to Sainte Pélagie. He had written to inquire of her whether General Biron, also a prisoner there, had access to the women's quarters. "Really, sir," she answered, "for a wise man you have embarked on a very indiscreet matter. This is just like the folly of husbands; they want to know, to know all; they are always asking for truth and then gnaw their thumbs when they've got it." She was able, however, to assure him that even General Biron was innocuous at

<sup>1</sup> First President of Revolutionary Tribunal. For being too humane he was tried by it and sent to La Force, July 30.

Sainte Pélagie since he was accompanied to prison by his new mistress !

She ends her letter by saying :

“ I must also tell you they have quite recently put us in quarantine, and we see each other no more than if we were suffering from plague. We are staring at our walls and meditating on our salvation. I am rather wretched over it ; I had abandoned my old Plutarch for the society of three women, of whom yours was by far the most pleasant. I expect she is now weeping or swearing, until she can begin to laugh again. As for me, so as not to be out of things, I am taking up Tacitus again, and in the history of Tiberius' reign I shall learn all that one must expect of delations and of the Sejanus that pays for them.”

On the 17th of September she received a visit from some prison inspectors ; she could not imagine why they came, for none of the questions they asked seemed to have any bearing on her case. Could it be curiosity that brought them there ? She wrote after their departure to the clerk of the First Division of the Home Office to inquire. Once her friend, Champagneux, had been that clerk, and had been responsible for the administrative régime of the prisons ; now a stranger reigned in his stead, for one Paré was Minister for Home Affairs,<sup>1</sup> employing a clerk called Rousselin. She begged this clerk to inform her why she has been kept in gaol for nearly four months, and how long they intend keeping her there. Is she there because she is Roland's wife ? Is she a hostage for him ? that she might also be on parole at her own home. Every one, of course, knows that Roland is not in Lyons nor busy raising rebellion in the south. If she is considered dangerous—a

-<sup>1</sup> Garat retired August 15.



suspect, in fact—would it not have been enough to hand her over to the supervision of her section ? What is she being punished for ? She is hard up for funds, and she cannot get at her own things to sell them or raise money on them, for they are all under Government seal. She begs that she may be informed as to her fate, as she would prefer foreknowing to ignoring it. To this letter she received no reply.

An old acquaintance of Roland's, Edmé Mentelle, came forward in September to help Manon in any way he could. In the old days when Brissot was editor of the *Patriote Française* he had been very intimate with him and was well known to all the Gironde. Mentelle was a geographer by profession, and advertised his maps constantly in Brissot's paper. Sometimes it was the county of Avignon, sometimes the Isle of San Domingo, that were announced for publication ; in 1792, the centre of interest being the war, it was the Low Countries and the Eastern Frontier that were for sale. He also gave geographical courses in the rue de Seine, and Roland when in office allotted him an artist's apartment in the Louvre. There he occupied one of the twenty-six lodgings of the Grand Gallery, and was a neighbour of Madame Roland's friend, Pasquier, with whom she had tried to plan Roland's escape.

This man proved a very good friend to prisoners in time of trouble, for in spite of the "Law of Suspects," and other risks, he constantly went to see Brissot at the Abbaye, and later visited him at the Conciergerie. He conveyed letters from Brissot to various friends, and also received the



Memoirs which the ex-editor was writing in gaol at the earnest request of his friend, Madame Roland, Memoirs which he called his Political Testament.

During the last weeks of Manon's life, M. Mentelle, or, as she called him, "Jany," became her supreme confidant, and this in spite of the fact that he hardly ever managed to get speech with her. Twice he went openly to Fouquier-Tinville and begged permission to visit her—a very courageous thing to do under the circumstances—but his request was denied, and all he could do was to commission Chauveau Lagarde, the counsel who was given access to Sainte Pélagie in order to make out the defence of Madame Pétion's mother, to tell Madame Roland that he longed to be of service to her. "Jany" became a great comfort to Madame Roland; she felt she could trust his friendship and his discretion absolutely; she wrote to him every few days at Sophie Grandchamp's lodging. And it was from this lodging that "Jany" fetched the fourth, fifth and sixth books of the *Mémoires particulières* and *Dernières Pensées*, her letters of farewell to her girl and her maid, and, supremest mark of confidence, the copy-books containing her *Confessions*, now lost.

"Jany" was charged with going regularly once a week to fetch these precious documents, documents which Sophie was dreadfully afraid of housing. Sometimes "Jany" sends the poor prisoner English books, for example a new novel, which he thought might distract her, *The Story of Lady Barton in the Form of Letters*.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> By Eliz. Griffith, published 1771.

Madame Roland began to teach Madame Pétion's boy to read English from this book, as it was so simply written. She had already tried to make him understand her adored Thomson, but she found he was not old enough to get any value out of so elevated a work! The one thing that poor Madame Roland regretted bitterly during the last weeks of life was that dear "Jany" had not had the care of *all* her manuscripts; he seemed so much more business-like and dependable than Champagneux or Bosc, that through him she felt confident that some of them would reach the posterity to which she was making her appeal. Bosc unluckily had the first four copy-books of the *Mémoires particulières* hidden away at Sainte Radégonde. She longed for "Jany" to see these recollections, else he could barely understand the rest of her work. They dealt with the sweetest time of her life, the years before she was eighteen, "the sage exquisite morning of a spring day." She wrote to him of the years that followed that had made her familiar with adversity, and had developed something in her which made her know herself superior to ill-fortune. Then of laborious years marked by the austere happiness of domestic duties. Then of the days of Revolution and the full development of her character, as well as the occasions on which it had been proved. "I have experienced generous and terrible sentiments which never flame more brightly than in times of political unrest, and in the confusion of all social relations. I have not been unfaithful to my principles. . . . I have had more virtues than pleasures. . . ."

“ If I escape from this universal ruin, I should like to occupy myself with the history of my times. . . .” And then going on to speak of her occupation in prison, she says: “ I have taken a sort of passion for Tacitus; I read him through for the fourth time with a new delight, soon I shall know him by heart, and I cannot go to bed without having savoured a few of his pages.”

On the 28th of September we find her writing to “ Jany ” of the cruel blow for which she had had to prepare poor Madame Pétion. Four days earlier, innocent old Madame Lefèvre, her mother, had been executed. Madame Pétion in a state of dreadful misery, clung to her only friend in gaol and sat all day in Manon’s cell. Of course it interfered with work, and there was so short a time for work, but still, as Madame Roland said to “ Jany,” it is always a happiness to be of use. Some one had told her that Brissot was to be sacrificed almost immediately, and that by a new and monstrous edict prisoners were no longer to be allowed to speak in their own defence, a device for accelerating the action of the Revolutionary Tribunal. With something of her old humour Madame Roland went on to say: “ So long as one could speak I felt a kind of vocation for the guillotine, but now one can have no preference to be massacred here or judged there; it’s all the same.”

As we turn the leaves of the rough copy-books to which Madame Roland consigned her memories and observations, we find no trace of fear or faltering, unless it be the tear by which the page is occasionally blotched. Her calm and self-

control were extraordinary, and though some of the fine temper and patience she displayed in gaol was due to the fact that she had schooled herself, like Rousseau's Émile, to submit to necessity and to behave, to quote a well-worn phrase, "as if her conduct were to be an example to the Universe," the greater part of it was due to her passion for Buzot. And yet when this love was only able to nourish itself on memory and constant anxiety, she remained as equable as when every visitor brought her a letter from her lover. There is no doubt she had the Stoic temper, and no higher praise could ever be extracted from her than that some one was like a Roman: for her it meant indifference to material goods, and a brave and contemptuous front to fate. Her courage was high and unsustained by mysticism or religion. With Sully she was obliged to own that she had failed in all she had tried to do: "*C'est très difficile de faire le bien de son pays.*" In prison she always made the best of things, and always went on writing though friends disappeared and letters ceased to come. With merely personal suffering she was not concerned. As a friend of Liberty she had welcomed the Revolution with transport, and now she was ready to pay for that earlier ecstasy with her life. She had never loved the people—she really contemned them and "their cannibal joys"—but she had idolised Humanity, that great vague entity which she saw as some god of modern mythology marching up the avenues of Time to a goal of glory. For her it was no inconsistency to worship Liberty and yet to despise the use men put it to. For



her at any rate it remained undegraded. We try, and try for the most part vainly, to realise what was that shimmering vision of Liberty which drew the Girondins to their doom, which invested them in their supreme moment, and in spite of past weaknesses and follies, with such an unearthly halo. Like many human ideals it cannot be put into words, and like many human ideals it was both a fetish and an inspiration.

When Madame Roland heard that all the Girondins in prison were to be tried, she made up her mind that the end could not be far off. She knew that she must be involved in the great disaster of their death, and therefore sat down to write farewell letters to her child, her maid and "Jany." To Eudora she wrote: "Remember your mother, and do your duty; that is the sum of my advice"; and then, her stoicism for the moment failing her, she added: "Good-bye, dear child, whom I have nursed at my breast and whom I would imbue with all my own sentiments. The day will come when you will be able to guess something of the effort it costs me at this moment not to break down over your sweet image. I press you to my heart." To her maid Fleury, who had been with her thirteen years, she wrote: "Remember me, and do not grieve; the good pass to glory in descending to the tomb; remember the peace I shall enjoy—a peace that no man may hereafter disturb." She begged Fleury to give Sœur Sainte Agathe, who had loved her since the convent days of childhood, a last message of gratitude. She assured "Jany" that she was about to die peacefully, knowing that he would one



day reanimate her personality by publishing all that she had ever communicated to him about herself. She greatly desired to be a living figure to posterity. It was the only kind of immortality she really cared about.

The paper on which her "last thoughts" were put down was headed: "To be or not to be, *it is the question*," and underneath these words she wrote: "This will soon be resolved for me."

After she had finished writing these letters and last thoughts she decided, since she had no poison at hand, to starve herself to death. Anything was better than to give pleasure to the dregs of the people by going on a tumbril to the guillotine. But starvation soon made her ill, and she was moved from her cell to the prison infirmary. Her courage ebbed a little in her weakness, and she mentioned the feelings of sadness and depression that beset her. Sophie Grandchamp, who went to see her in the infirmary, was careful not to speak to her of the Girondins or of their probable fate, she felt that it was all grieving her too greatly, and so they talked of indifferent things—of the character of the doctor who was attending Madame Roland, of the weather and of Roland. It was provoking to find out that the doctor who was so carefully bringing her back to life was a friend of Robespierre, but it inspired her with the idea of making this man convey a letter to him, embodying all her complaints and wrongs. In this letter she set out to defend Roland's financial honour, and pointed out that he had made many enemies by reason of his integrity, and that, disgusted with the turn affairs had taken, he was living quietly

in retirement and was entirely out of touch and sympathy with the fighters in the south. She is aware that both she and her husband are accused of corrupting the public mind; but she would dearly like to know the cause of Robespierre's animosity against her. After all she has been in prison for five months, sometimes she hears the sentry underneath her window talking calmly of her execution, sometimes she reads the filthy calumnies of the gutter press written by persons who know nothing of her. She is badly in want of money, and has been reduced to trying to sell the empty bottles in her cellar in the rue la Harpe on which no seal has been placed. This had caused an uproar in the section and unfortunately the arrest of her landlord. She is much afraid for the safety of her poor servants.

"It is not in order to excite your pity, Robespierre, that I tell you these things. I am above your pity, it would only offend me, but I tell you them for your instruction. Fortune is fickle, and so is the favour of the people. . . . After the hours of persecution am I to have the further honour of martyrdom? or am I destined to languish here in captivity, exposed to the first rising it may be considered suitable to excite, or shall I be what they call 'deported' and by some inadvertence of the ship's captain be dropped with other human cargo four leagues out to sea? Speak: it is something to know one's fate, and with a soul like mine one can then face it."

For some reason unknown this letter was never dispatched to Robespierre. Possibly the doctor refused to convey it to his friend. In any case it could have done her no conceivable good.

When she had recovered her health again she

went on working at the lost Confessions. It was difficult to tell the truth about herself and others, but she tried to do it unflinchingly ; for she felt it was the only way to serve her party and her cause. To "Jany" she wrote : "I never have had the smallest temptation to be esteemed for more than I am worth ; I want people to know me as I *am*, good and bad, it's all alike to me." She has another box of manuscript ready for him, and she is most eager that it should find a safe hiding-place—and it must have "a protector" should anything happen to "dear Jany."

"As for me, Jany, all is ended. You know the malady the English call 'heart-broken.' I am attacked by it beyond any remedy. I have no wish to retard its course, the fever has begun, I hope it will soon be over."

She begs Jany to let Buzot know of her fate should he peradventure escape to America.

"When men say that the *morale* love gives is worth just nothing, they make a big proposition very lightly, which if true might be applied to all human passions : it is through *morale* that they become passions and produce splendid and brilliant results ; take away this *morale* and life is reduced to physical needs and appetites. . . . If the *morale* of love is admitted I believe it to be the most fertile as well as the most pure source of great virtue and splendid action. . . ."

## CHAPTER XIX

### LAST DAYS

“Ne soyez pas fier d’avoir supporter votre malheur.  
Pouviez vous ne pas le supporter?”

*Pensées d’une Reine, CARMEN SYLVA.*

ON the 3rd of October the Public Prosecutor Amar made his report to the Convention on the case of the Girondins then awaiting trial, a report founded for the most part on Camille Desmoulins’ *Histoire des Brissotins*. The lampoon was a tissue of misrepresentation, as we know, but it served well enough to form the basis of the act of accusation preferred against these politicians when on trial for their lives.

Bad news and sad news came filtering through the prison bars of Sainte Pélagie in those early October days. Lyons, it was rumoured, had been entered by Conventionalist troops and was now the scene of merciless barbarity. Pétion, Buzot and Barbaroux were said to be starving outlaws in Calvados. Madame Roland heard that her old enemy, the unhappy Marie Antoinette, had been driven to the guillotine, and that her passing had occasioned no murmur of pity from the crowd that had stared at her till the end. No prisoner knew which day might be his last, and this very uncertainty made Madame Roland work all the harder at her self-imposed task of justifying the Girondins to

posterity. It was a terrible thought to her that future generations might believe Desmoulins' story to be true.

On the 24th of October she was interrupted in her memoir writing by being cited as a witness in the Girondin trial. She laid down her pen with a sigh of relief; at last it might be possible to strike a blow for the honour of her friends, if not for their lives. In the court at the Palais de Justice she listened to the reading of the "act of accusation," and as she listened she took stock of the scene in which the tragedy was to be played. The day was dull and the large room, once the Parliament of Louis XIV., renamed the Hall of Equality, looked specially gloomy. At the far end of the room was a dais on which sat Fouquier-Tinville and four judges; the busts of Brutus, Marat and Lepelletier were on the wall above them. On the left were the steps on which the accused were placed. A sort of iron arm-chair—*la selette* or *le pot*—was reserved for the unhappy person accounted chief victim. On this occasion Brissot occupied the seat of honour. Below the *gradins* were the counsel and witnesses for the defence. The prisoners faced the light coming in from four windows and the jury sat underneath these windows, at two rows of arm-chairs and tables. At the back of the room a high balustrade kept the general public in its place, the centre of the room was quite bare. As Madame Roland listened she was surprised to find that the act of accusation merely consisted of the report Amar had read to the Convention on the 3rd of October, which she recognised as being founded on Desmoulins'



scandalous pamphlet. Madame Roland could call the act nothing better than "a masterpiece of perfidy." After it had been read, the counsel for the defence, Chauveau Lagarde,<sup>1</sup> stated that, contrary to all precedent and form, the evidence sustaining the act had not been communicated to him, and he begged that this evidence might be at once produced. After some whispering, the president of the court, Fouquier-Tinville, stammered out that the "*pièces justificatives*" were for the most part in the houses of the accused under seals; that they would be produced in due course, and that meanwhile the trial was to proceed. "But, Jany!" Madame Roland wrote to Mentelle after the trial, "I heard this said quite distinctly with my two ears. I looked to see if it were not a dream. I wondered whether posterity would come to know about it."

Directly the court had decided that the trial was to proceed in spite of the fact that no documentary evidence was forthcoming, all the witnesses were hustled down below till they were wanted. Before leaving the court, Madame Roland looked at the prisoners; it was at least relief to know that none of "the fugitives" were joined to them, though it was misery to see the well-known features of Brissot, the kind face of Lauze-Duperret, the familiar figures of Fauchet, Vergniaud, Isnard in that dim and dreadful anteroom to Death.<sup>2</sup> They

<sup>1</sup> Chauveau had defended Marie Antoinette and Madame Pétion. Madame Roland designed him as her counsel, but did without him in the end.

<sup>2</sup> Brissot, Vergniaud, Lauze-Duperret, Carra, Gardien, Valazé, Duprat, Sillery, Fauchet, Ducos, Boyer-Fonfrède, Lasource, Beauvais, Duchastel, Minvielle, Lacaze, Lehardi, Boilleau, Antiboul, Viger, were all there.

were nearly all contemporaries of her own ; all had, like herself, forgotten their own advantage in trying to benefit the people. She could not know that this was the last look she would ever give those men, for was she not expecting to be called as a witness, to be given one last chance of proving her friendship for them ? Attendant took her to a waiting-room till her turn came to give evidence. She was there for hours, and talked freely to a good many people. It pleased her to think that Chabot and Hébert in the next room could hear all she said. “ Jany ” came and spoke to her, and Adam Lux, who also had been summoned as a witness, managed, in brushing past her, to deliver a letter to her from Champagneux who, like himself, was a prisoner at La Force. She was delighted to hear once more from this old friend, and she sat down at once to scribble a reply to send back by the same messenger. After all there was something rather piquant and adventurous in answering correspondence in such a place.

“ Here I am writing in one of the *antres de la mort* with a pen which may soon be signing the order for cutting my throat.

“ I was congratulating myself at having been called a witness in this case of the deputies, but it seems as though I should not be heard. These executioners fear the truth I have to utter and the energy I might use in setting them forth. It is far easier for them to cut our throats without listening to us. You will never see Vergniaud and Valazé again ; your heart may cherish the hope, but why haven’t your eyes been opened by all that is happening ? We shall all perish, my friend ; our oppressors would not think themselves safe if we did not. . . . One of my greatest

regrets is to see you exposed to share our fate ; we tore you from your retreat, you would have been there still but for our entreaty. . . . This idea pains me more than any of my own misfortunes, but in the good days of the Revolution it was not possible to foresee so cruel a future. We have all been taken in, my dear Champagneux, or rather, we perish victims of the weakness of honest men. These men thought they had secured the triumph of virtue by giving it an equality with crime. . . . Good-bye. I send what you ask for ('une touffe des mes cheveux'). I write to you in a corner under the very eyes of my executioners, and I have some pride in challenging them all."

Evening came, and Madame Roland was transported back to her prison. It was disappointing in a way not to have been called to give evidence, but now she knew the exact phrasing of the act of accusation she could all the better prepare the speech she meant to make in court. The next two days were spent in making "Observations on the act of accusation"<sup>1</sup> in meeting the various charges levelled against the Girondins—charges of complicity in the Champs de Mars massacre, of the circulation of libels against patriots, and of connivance with Brunswick. Roland's house, in special, was said to be full of immense bundles of libels on patriots, which Madame Roland was occupied in distributing; thefts were alleged to have taken place at the Tuileries under his régime; the people were said to be starving because Government funds had been expended in a press campaign against patriots; and every one was reminded that the

<sup>1</sup> Published as *Observations rapides sur l'acte d'accusation contre les députés*, par Amar.

contents of the iron safe had been carefully sorted by Roland himself before being brought to the Assembly, with the intention of withdrawing incriminating evidence against the Brissotins, who, of course, it was well known, had trafficked in colonial administration and Government appointments.

In reply to some of these charges Madame Roland made notes. "Why are we then all so poor? Why are Mesdames Guadet, Gensonné, Brissot, Pétion, Roland, without a sixpence in the world? Most of the counts of the act are absurd, and as for saying the Girondins governed, why, the notion would be nonsensical to any one who was in the habit of going much to the Convention. They did nothing, they were not strong men, they were not leaders, they merely wished to found a republic in wisdom—not in blood. - And imagine confectioning an act of accusation in the hope that it will be supported by documentary evidence as yet unseen and which is supposed to be at the houses of the prisoners!" After scribbling down her "Observations on the Act," she sent a little note to "Jany" saying how annoyed she was to have had no consecutive talk with him at the Palais de Justice the day before. The beadle's eye seemed to be fastened on her, and she was afraid of compromising him, and though she fully realises she herself has nothing to lose, she wishes to spare her friends. She had even gone so far as to cut an old acquaintance because she thought it dangerous for him to seem to know her. Then writing also to Bosc she begged of him a great favour—a sufficient quantity of opium to put he

quietly to sleep, should she feel it desirable to do away with herself. He refused, saying "in the most painful letter he had ever written in his life," that it was as important to the cause of liberty as it was to her future glory that she should resolve to mount the scaffold, and this is her courageous reply to his refusal :

" Your letter, my dear Bosc, does me great good. . . . We do not differ as much as you imagine, we have only not understood each other. I have no intention of leaving at once, but of procuring myself the means of doing so whenever it should become convenient. . . . I swear to you that my request was not inspired by weakness : I am splendidly well ; my head is as level and my courage as fresh as ever."

In these last days she heard of her brother-in-law's arrest and of seals having been placed on the houses at Villefranche and Clos. It was dreadful to her to feel that she and her husband were the cause of that kindly, stupid old priest's death—for arrest and death had begun to be looked upon as synonymous ; but worse things had yet to be faced. The sittings of the Court trying the Girondins had been taken up on the 25th, 26th and 27th of October by the depositions of Hébert, Chabot, Destournelles, Chaumette ; the sittings of the 28th and 29th by those of eight other equally prejudiced persons. After this it was decided to admit no further evidence, and the Girondin trial came to an abrupt conclusion. Madame Roland then realised that she could in no way help any of her friends again ; that she would never more have speech with any of them. With absolute horror she learnt that Pache, Hébert, Chabot,



Fabre and other deadly enemies of the Girondin prisoners had read out long diatribes against the accused in lieu of evidence and that witnesses for the defence were never to be called. The trial anyway was a miserable affair: the accused wrangled with the witnesses; instead of proudly avowing that they had endeavoured to modify and restrain the tide of revolution, and had sought the public good in its highest sense, the prisoners only seemed to wish to defend themselves against the blows of their enemies. Even Vergniaud appeared to excuse rather than to take pride in his opinions. Brissot showed a braver front, but no great word or great sentiment escaped any of these men during their trial; they seemed to think of nothing but saving their own skins. But the moment of their condemnation was the moment of their transfiguration: it is then that they became the legendary heroes of romance.

On the 29th of October they were condemned to die, the members of the Tribunal by a special enactment being allowed to declare "their consciences sufficiently illumined" to pronounce judgment, though an immense amount of evidence remained to be heard. Valazé stabbed himself in court, the rest went back to the Conciergerie and partook of that last immortal supper with his corpse in their midst. The following midday they died, and as they waited their turn to mount the little stairway they sang,

*"Plûtôt la mort que l'esclavage.  
C'est la devise des Français."*

Presently the voices got fewer and the singing died away. It was a record execution—twenty-one heads in thirty-eight minutes. The day was

very wet ; spectators, however, were numerous, and their applause vociferous and prolonged. Sanson tried to get done with the business quickly and return to his own fireside and his family. After it was all over, Madame Grandchamp dragged herself to Sainte Pélagie. It was a dreadful thing to have to tell Manon of the death of these men, and yet surely her poor friend must in some measure be prepared for the tragic news. Madame Roland knew only too well what to expect : she looked for a second at Sophie's face, turned deathly pale and began to sob. The two women cried quietly and miserably for a while, but presently Madame Roland stood up very straight and resolute, saying, "I shed these tears for my country : my friends have died martyrs for liberty—their memory needs no feeble tribute of this kind. Now my own fate is fixed ; there is no more uncertainty. I shall join them in a little while, and show myself worthy of following them." Sophie Grandchamp then pulled herself together, and the two women talked on far into the evening, and Madame Roland begged Sophie to come back early the following day. Promising to do so, she left the cell, but the concierge told her it was terribly dangerous for her to visit a condemned woman and strongly advised Madame Grandchamp to come no more to the gaol. Sophie, who was no coward, then said she would come in disguise, and spent the whole night in devising a make-up that "made her unrecognisable to herself."

She went round early to Sainte Pélagie, and the concierge took her to the linen room, to which place Madame Roland had been introduced before daylight. They talked ; Madame Roland said that

it was neither death nor the scaffold that frightened her—it was the infamous Tribunal, the thought of the cannibal people who looked on the murder of those who loved them and wished to serve them as an enjoyable triumph. She begged Sophie to tell her whether it was necessary for her to suffer to the end. In her Gethsemane she did not ask counsel of God but of a human friend, and this friend, thinking over her question and knowing the stuff of which Manon was made, persuaded her to drink the cup of agony to its dregs, to leave the enemy no chance of smirching her memory, no excuse for saying that she was guilty or afraid. Sophie, moreover, begged Manon to speak out clearly and unfalteringly about her country at her trial, and try and make the public understand the principles for which she and her friends had stood and the full iniquity of the condemnation of the Gironde. As she looked at Manon, whose fresh colour and calm face showed she had slept well the previous night, Sophie could not help hoping against hope that that beloved head might be spared the horror of decapitation. It was utterly shocking to think of that live, beautiful thing held up a bloody spectacle to the laughter of the people. Madame Roland, who was overcome by no such visions, discussed the question of suicide quite calmly with her friend, and then, persuaded that it would be right for her to mount the guillotine, she asked Sophie whose death had made most impression on the people of Paris. The answer was “that of Charlotte Corday.” Manon was silent for a moment, and then, taking Sophie’s hand, she said, “The request I am about to make to you is hazarded, because I know your very soul.”

Sophie looked up, but Manon avoided her eyes, and continued speaking, though in an altered voice: "Have you sufficient courage to assist at my last moments, so that you may give an authentic testimony of what they were?" Sophie shook like an aspen leaf as she answered, "Yes"; and Manon, looking up at her friend's agonised face, said, "It is terrible; my own request makes me shudder." Then, covering her face with both hands, she went on in a quiet voice: "Only promise to watch me pass. Your presence would lessen the terror this ghastly journey holds for me. At least I should know that some one worthy of my trust would testify to the firmness which will not abandon me even in that trial. You will be satisfied with me, but you must not grieve." Sophie bent her head, saying, "I obey; where do you wish me to be stationed?" "At the end of the Pont Neuf," said Manon, "close to the first step, leaning against the parapet, and dressed as you are to-day." Sophie was to run no risks; she was to disguise herself for that last tryst of friendship. Once this pact had been concluded Madame Roland became quite serene, giving Sophie everything which was not absolutely necessary to her for the last few days of life that remained. They talked for three solid hours, but never to her dying day could Sophie remember anything they said; she only knew there were no tears. When she got up to go she saw a thick mist between herself and Manon, and then found that they were in each other's arms: the next thing she knew was that Madame Roland was calling the concierge, saying, "Take her away. I will not talk any more. She must be saved from a situation that



may cost her her life.” Sophie was conveyed home, and there fell into convulsions. Her life was despaired of, but Grandpré, her lover, nursed her back to sanity in time to keep her tryst. Not that he knew she had a tryst to keep ; she did not tell him that, for she feared that he, in his oversolicitous way, would try to prevent her keeping it, when to her it was an obligation to be fulfilled at the cost of life itself.

At Sainte Pélagie Madame Roland had been merely *détenue*. In order to transfer her to a *maison de justice* such as the Conciergerie, it was necessary for the public prosecutor to issue a warrant of arrest against her. The warrant<sup>1</sup> was duly issued against *la nommée Phelipon*, wife of *le nommé Roland*, ci-devant Minister of the Interior, and in it she was accused of conspiracy against the unity and indivisibility of the Republic, and of having sought to inaugurate and foment civil war.

On the afternoon of the very day Sophie had last seen her friend, Madame Roland was taken in a cab to the Conciergerie. It was a few hours only since the Girondins had died. Her heart was heavy enough anyway, but it sank even a little lower as the cab turned into the Cour de Mai on the right of the Palace of Justice. As usual, this place was crowded with women, whom it amused to watch the daily arrivals and departures from the prison. Curious eyes followed the cab as it drew up at the iron gate in the archway at the back of the courtyard ; some people recognised her, and as Madame Roland stepped out of the vehicle she heard a confused sound of laughter and ap-

<sup>1</sup> See p. 546.



plause. Prisoners were very fortunate if they escaped the mud and rotten eggs which were thrown at new arrivals. Passing quickly through the iron gate, Madame Roland walked, as every other victim walked, across a small paved yard to the office of the concierge, *la greffe*, where newcomers' names were entered and prisoners transferred from the keeping of one gaoler to another. Behind the *greffe* was another narrow room, in which condemned persons sat and waited for the tumbrils. On the opposite side of the passage was the room in which the hair of women about to be executed was cut. Great baskets of hair stood along the wall. Madame Roland saw a confused number of police, gaolers, lawyers, prisoners and ushers moving about the paved yard and the passages, and finally, after crossing the women's courtyard, she found herself in a cell; for she was a *pistole*, and not one of the *pailleux*, that is to say, she could afford to pay for a mattress or share of a mattress, and therefore was not thrown into a dark hole wherein dirty chopped straw was the only bedding. The Girondins had had to share five mattresses between them, and though there were nineteen palliasses in the women's quarters, on some nights fifty or sixty women had to try and sleep on them. As Madame Roland walked that evening in the women's courtyard, she found that Madame du Barry and Josephine Beauharnais were among her companions, as well as a certain number of prostitutes. Various men, Count Beugnot, Clavières, Philippe Egalité and Riouffe were conversing amiably enough through the railing that separated the women's courtyard from the men's promenade.

The Paris prisons were on the whole very badly managed, and Madame Roland found that the Conciergerie was worse than Sainte Pélagie, just as she had found Sainte Pélagie was worse than the Abbaye. It is rather difficult to state their worst points, as everything about them was infamous. When a prisoner was *au secret* or one of the *pailleux* he was thrown into a dark cell with possibly one or two companions. Heaps of chopped straw lay in the corners for bedding. The floor was foul beyond description, for the cells were never cleaned out. Riouffe, who had been brought to the Conciergerie from Bordeaux as a Brissotin, experienced it all. After a hundred and forty-nine hours in a carriage with heavy irons on his leg he was shown into a cell: even the gaoler averted his head as he opened the door; the stench was terrible. When, thirteen days later, he had to appear at the Tribunal he presented a filthy appearance, hair and beard and clothes were full of chopped straw and dirt. A great deal of the sympathy and pity which might have been excited in the public by the appearance of persons of refinement, cleanliness and self-respect was in this way alienated. Many of the victims of the Revolution appeared before the Tribunal in a condition so dazed, dirty and degraded as to appear hardly human.

Count Beugnot had a similar experience to that of Riouffe but managed to get transferred, through the interest of Grandpré, to the Infirmary of the gaol, which he thought might be less horrible than the common cell. The Infirmary, however, proved to be a stone tunnel 100 feet by 25, lighted by two small windows in the vault. The smoke of

lamps and fires had blackened the stones, and both ends of the tunnel were closed by iron railings. To Beugnot it seemed like the Palais des Enfers he had seen at the Opera. Forty or fifty mattresses were placed along the sides of this long passage, and three more often than two prisoners lay on each. The room was never cleaned out, and the straw of the mattresses was never renewed nor the coverlets changed. The sanitary arrangements beggared description. It was an inferno more disgusting than ever the mind of a free man had conceived. The same coverlet covered dead and living. It was never considered worth while to remove one corpse at a time. The attendant always waited for three or four. The hospital really was far worse than any of the cells. Dying men were pushed therefrom to the Tribunal, and really, as Beugnot says, half the courage shown by victims on their way to the scaffold was the result of feeling that at last the end of their atrocious misery was in sight. General Biron, for example, died gladly, saying, as he took leave of his fellow-prisoners: "*Il y a trop longtemps que ces gens-ci m'ennuient, ils vont me couper le col, mais du moins tout sera fini.*"

Madame Roland was at any rate spared some of the worst horrors, though she too mentioned her disgusting lodging and the shortage of mattresses and coverlets. "I was put in an *infecte* place, and lay down without a sheet on a bed a fellow-prisoner was kind enough to lend, but still it was a bed and not a heap of foul straw." We have hardly any details of this kind from her; she was above all material discomfort by this time, and five months of prison had made many ill

endurable ; the great thing with her was to prepare for death. After all, it was hardly worth while providing comfortable beds in a place from which men went so quickly to eternal sleep. They could well watch and pray through their last nights on earth.

Her arrival at the Conciergerie was an event. Every one pressed forward to see her as she crossed the women's courtyard. They wondered how she would take her punishment ; after all, unlike the majority of prisoners loitering there, she had helped to promote the Revolution. Would she complain of the recoil ? Would she speak of the bitter injustice of her death ?

Beugnot, prejudiced as he was against Roland and all his works, was greatly attracted by Madame Roland's appearance, her fearless blue eyes, her glossy brown hair, her noble face and carriage, and above all her beautiful little hand and musical voice. There was a naïveté about her obvious pride in Roland's two periods of office, her disclaimer that resentment played any part in the famous letter to the King. Beugnot thought her very unjust in conversation to all save her own party. As for Louis XVI., whose demeanour before execution he was praising, Madame Roland said : " It's all very well, he behaved well on the scaffold ; but one must not think that a merit ; kings are brought up from childhood to act."

To Beugnot, who did not really understand her, it seemed that self-love was her dominating characteristic. " At the risk of reducing Roland to an automaton and leaving him nothing but his doubtful virtue, she ascribed to herself the greater part of his literary productions and all his political



glory. She deprived others of the pleasure of praising her by going ahead of them . . . and she thought herself *en rapport* with the most famous personages of antiquity. She could not see that there was as much difference between the wife of Roland and a Roman consul, as between the Brutus of the Revolutionary Tribunal and Brutus of the Capitol.”<sup>1</sup>

While in prison she talked continually of converting her fellow-countrymen into Greeks and Romans, and astonished all hearers by the beauty of her language and the elevation of her thoughts. She said that the coldness of French people astonished her: “If I had been free and they had taken my husband off to execution, I should have stabbed myself at the foot of the scaffold, and I am persuaded that when Roland hears of my death he will pierce his own heart.”

Somehow she managed to impress every one, and they were a very mixed lot. Side by side on the same filthy bedding were thrown the Duchesse de Grammont and a handkerchief thief, Madame Roland and a woman of the streets, a nun and a patient from La Salpêtrière. Disgusting scenes and language were under these circumstances unavoidable; at night the quarrelling was very bad, but Madame Roland’s room was acknowledged to be the shrine of peace in an inferno, just as her presence in the public parts of the prison was an inspiration. She had but to walk into the courtyard and every one was well behaved; no one seemed to want to displease her. She gave her money to the very poorest and to all advice, consolation and courage. Often as she

<sup>1</sup> *Mémoires du Comte de Beugnot*, vol. i.



paced up and down the yard, thinking of the past and of the immediate future, women pressed round her and held her hand.

It was quite possible, as we know, for women to talk with men through the railings that separated their courtyard from the men's promenade, and Madame Roland had many conversations with her husband's former colleague, Clavières. Riouffe, who watched her with great interest, noted that prison had left its trace upon her features, though in manners she seemed collected and cheerful. He also noted that there was "far more in her eyes than in those of most women," "a wealth of experience," "a fund of sympathy." She spoke, too, with the freedom and the courage of a great man. "This republican talk coming from the mouth of a pretty Frenchwoman whose scaffold was already prepared, was one of those miracles of the Revolution to which one had not become accustomed."<sup>1</sup> Men and women stood attentive round her in a kind of stupefied admiration. Her voice, her way of talking no one could have enough of; it was music to many a weary prisoner. She, unlike the rest, was absolutely at leisure from herself. "Of her friends, the dead deputies, she spoke with respect, but never with effeminate pity;" she even reproached them for their weakness in office. Sometimes she emerged from her cell with red eyes and the woman who looked after her said, "Before you she gathers all her strength together, but in her cell she sometimes leans against the window sobbing for three hours."

<sup>1</sup> Riouffe's *Mémoires sur les Prisons*, vol. i. p. 54.

## CHAPTER XX

### TRIAL AND EXECUTION

“Si notre âme a value quelque chose, c’est qu’elle a brûée plus ardemment que les autres.”—*Les Nourritures Terrestres*, ANDRÉ GIDE.

NO one stayed at the Conciergerie very long, and judicial formalities were usually pushed through quickly. It was on the morning after her arrival at the Conciergerie that Madame Roland was summoned to the office of the Revolutionary Tribunal for her first interrogation.<sup>1</sup> David, one of the judges in the Girondin trial, Lescot Fleuriot, representing the Public Prosecutor, and a clerk, were the only persons present. After answering a number of formal questions as to name, age, husband, occupation and history, she brought her tale down to the time when Roland became Municipal Officer at Lyons. She was asked for how long he held this post, and for the name of the Mayor under whom he served. She could not precisely remember the length of time he held his post, nor the name of the Mayor, but she thought it was Doctor Vitet. Questioned whether, since the meeting of the National Convention, she had not been in the habit of receiving Vergniaud, Guadet, Gensonné, Duprat, Duperret, Carra, Fauchet, Sillery, Brissot, Fonfrède, Ducos, Barbaroux, Biroteau, Buzot, Salles, Louvet, Lehardi, Minvielle, Dufriche-Valazé and others de-

<sup>1</sup> It may have been the same day. November 1 and 3 were dates of interrogation.

nominated as Brissotins, Girondins, etc., and if in the different conferences which took place there was not a question of departmental troops and of the means of making use of the same, she answered she had received no one under the denominations indicated, that she never had held a circle or any conference, that her husband received his colleagues, his old friends, and people who chose to visit him. The old friends included Brissot, Pétion, Buzot, Barbaroux, Louvet, Guadet, Gensonné, and these persons sometimes brought their friends or colleagues with them; she had heard them discuss, not in conference, but in general conversation, the different subjects which occupied the Assembly, and which bore on "*la chose publique.*"

She was reminded that she had been questioned about "departmental troops," and that it was astonishing she should give so evasive and vague an answer. They accused her roundly of *bavardage*, demanded a simple Yes or No, and told her she was not to behave as if she were still in the Ministerial palace.

Madame Roland replied that she had not been evasive, as the only answer possible had been a general one. She had never heard subjects of the kind discussed systematically. Questioned whether amongst those mentioned there was not at least one with whom she had "relations," she answered that both she and Roland had been equal friends with Brissot, Pétion and Buzot.

Her judges cross-examined her more and more insistently. They suspected her of some particular intrigue with some particular person.

She defended herself from this attack by saying that she had known these men with Roland

and through Roland, and, knowing them, she had had for each one the particular degree of esteem and attachment that each seemed to her to merit.

Again the judges accused her of answering evasively and of outraging truth. What they want to know are the details of her particular relations with Barbaroux and Duperret. She answered that she had never had a *liaison* contrary to the interests of the Republic, and that she had no intention of concealing the truth.

But her accusers did not take this for an answer, and said it was known that she had been in correspondence with Barbaroux and those other traitors to their country who were trying to incite Eure and Calvados to rebellion.

She answered with dignity, "They went away as my friends; I did not recognise them as traitors; I desired to have news of them; I have received none." On this admission the judges pulled out their trump card. Quite so, but did she not employ Duperret, and was not he the go-between?

Yes, said Madame Roland—nothing she said could harm Duperret now—she had certainly asked him to read her plea aloud in the National Convention, fearing that it would not be otherwise heard, and certainly she had asked him for news of mutual friends.

Fragments in her handwriting seized at Duperret's house were then produced, which she was able to recognise as written by herself. The prisoner then swore that her answers contained the truth, and signed a paper to this effect.

The moment Madame Roland got back to prison she hastily wrote an account of the inter-

rogation and gave it to her maid Fleury. It was highly important to her mind that posterity should know her version of affairs. Two days later she was again examined by the same judges, and this time there were other persons present. She was accused of having outraged truth in her former examination by not admitting particular intimacy with Duperret. Quite truthfully she could answer that she had never seen Duperret alone in all her life, indeed, had never seen him more than ten times altogether. She knew him to be respected and trusted by mutual friends, and in making her protest to the Convention she naturally wrote to some one who would be interested in her case.

From this answer the examiners gathered she had been in communication with the rebels of Calvados. To this Madame Roland answered that there had been no rebellion at the time she had been imprisoned, and that she preserved for her friends the same sentiments which their love of liberty had originally inspired her with.

Being requested to state who was the greatest common friend that she and Duperret had, she answered "Barbaroux."

The judges then changed their line of attack, and asked whether she did not edit Roland's letters. Proudly she answered, "I never lent my thoughts to my husband, but he sometimes employed my hand."

But, they persisted, did not Roland during the time he was in office establish a "*Bureau d'Esprit Publique*," and was she not the director of this bureau, and was it not designed to bring about the fall of the Republic?



Madame Roland knew nothing of such a bureau, but she did know that a decree made in August 1792 had authorised the Minister of the Interior to distribute useful instruction and information throughout the country. Roland had delegated the charge of this distribution to some clerks; and he called it "Bureau of Patriotic Correspondence."

The cross-examiners pointed out to her that again she was outraging the truth, as it is common knowledge that the bureau did exist, and that the very words "*Bureau d'Esprit Publique*" were written over the door.

She answered that she was ready to honour truth at the peril of her life, but that she never saw such an inscription, and, needless to say, Roland had never wished to corrupt the public mind.

The judges then asked her when Roland had left Paris, and where he was. She answered that whether she knew or did not know she had no intention of answering such a question.

Again they felt it incumbent on them to point out to her that she was concealing the truth: was she not aware that truth penetrates the best of lies?

She replied that in her opinion a prisoner should answer for his own acts and not for those of others, adding that there is no law which obliges her to betray the first sentiments of nature to justice. At this the Public Prosecutor lost his temper—"avec une telle bavarde on n'en finirait jamais," he said impatiently.

Asked whether she had selected her counsel, she said she had chosen Chauveau Lagarde.

This concluded the evidence. Prisoners noticed that when she came down from this cross-examination her eyes were wet. She went straight to her

cell and began to write a *Projet de Défense*, which she intended to read aloud at her trial. In it she noted that the accusation preferred against her consisted entirely of an alleged conspiracy between herself and men who had been her friends before they had become Roland's political allies. Whether she had or had not maintained friendly relations with them in their exile seemed to her to be outside the scope of the examiners, and not in any way to bear on her case: to be true to friends could in no circumstances be accounted a crime. Duperret had certainly tried to convey letters to her, just as other friends had tried to arrange for her escape from gaol. She was aware that she had made enemies by embracing the cause of liberty, by welcoming the Revolution with transport, by assisting Roland as his secretary, but she denied the furthering of party cabals at her house, as well as the gathering together there of informal and secret Cabinet meetings. Everything had always been open and above board at her house. In spite of her innocence, however, she realises that she must perish, and only hopes that she may be the last victim immolated to the fury of party spirit. She prays that Heaven may enlighten the unhappy people whose liberty she had yearned for. "Liberty is for the proud souls who despise death." As for herself she has no fear of death, and if the Court considers it advisable to condemn her on the score of her opinions without proof of guilt or conspiracy she is ready for their judgment. Needless to say, this projected defence was never heard by the Court. The revolutionary Tribunal had by this time developed a very summary way of disposing of prisoners.

Although Madame Roland discussed the points of her defence with Chauveau Lagarde, her official counsel, she had no intention of implicating him in her trial, since its result was a foregone conclusion. On the last occasion he visited her at the Conciergerie, she took a ring from her finger and bade him farewell, requesting that he would not compromise himself by appearing as her advocate in Court, as neither he nor any one else could save her now.

In the original denunciation of the Rolands by the section Panthéon, the section which Danton represented, it had been suggested that the Committee of Public Safety should cross-examine the household of the accused—that is to say, the man and maid-servant and the governess. The sectional petition went on to state that the man having heard conversations and plots discussed at his master's table for establishing a horrible conspiracy against the well-being of the Republic, and on the state of the towns Thionville and Lille, and to ask him whether it is not true that during the siege of these two towns a dozen of the deputies of the Convention (which the Committee should order the servant to name) were not daily at the Rolands' table, and did not put forward the most revolting opinions on popular government and on the impossibility of the Republic continuing to exist for more than a year if all the authorities should fight each other. If it is not true that they had divided France into twenty-four departments, and that each of the guests reserved one for himself, with minor situations for friends in each department. Amongst the guests, Brissot, Barbaroux, Vergniaud, Gensonné, Buzot and Guadet were named.

That the evidence of "an excellent citizeness, Mademoiselle Mignot, should be taken ; since she has knowledge of horrible plottings among the guests ; she can tell how harshly Roland received the Lille deputies, whom he treated as cowards because they did not make a sortie and get killed ; how the deputies answered that if they had not done that which had been accounted to them a crime, the town would have been lost."

That she should be asked to repeat what she had heard Brissot say on coming into the room as they were sitting down to dinner : " My friends, don't you know the siege of Lille is raised ? " That this fatal news petrified the guests.

That the maid should be examined as to whether, in allocating the governments of the Federal Republic, Roland was not to be a King, and whether she did not look upon Mademoiselle as the daughter of a future King. That Mademoiselle Mignot be asked whether it had not been arranged to cede Brittany to the English, and Artois and Lorraine to the Emperor.

Most of these charges are quite absurd, but they clearly show the intention of the accusers to identify the Rolands with the treason of Dumouriez, and to establish against them the charge of promoting the crime of Federalism.

In accordance with these recommendations the Public Prosecutor caused Madame Roland's household to be examined.<sup>1</sup> First came Mademoiselle Mignot, Eudora's governess, aged fifty-five. She deposed that since the 13th of August 1792 she had lived at the Rolands' house to teach the girl Roland music ; that she was her governess. She of

<sup>1</sup> November 7.



course had noticed that many deputies came to the house, such as Brissot, Gensonné, Guadet, Louvet, Barbaroux, Buzot, Pétion, Duperret, Duprat, Chasset, Vergniaud, Condorcet and others whose names she did not remember; that notably Brissot, Buzot, Gorsas, Gensonné, Louvet came more frequently than the others, and had more direct relations with the woman Roland, often visiting her alone in her cabinet; that one day, being in the said cabinet with the woman Roland, Brissot came in with a furious air and said: "Don't you know that the siege of Lille is raised?" That she saw the woman Roland nod to Brissot and answer, "I know, I know the good news."

For the rest, Roland and his wife never showed the speaker much confidence, never talked about public affairs in front of her, but that from time to time she had heard things which subsequent events had enabled her to attach meanings to. She had observed that Roland and his wife, during April and May, were in continual apprehension, that they slept out, that she told them often at that time that she wanted to leave their employ. She noticed they were glad to think of the possibility of civil war, and that one day, all three being together, Roland said to her, "Well, if we all three were to be guillotined, what would you say?" That she had replied she could not fear such a fate if her conscience were clear; that Roland had then said, "But supposing it came to that?" She answered it would be the law of the strongest, but that even in such a case she would wish that her blood should be as the fruitful dew spilt for the happiness of her country; that Madame Roland had said, looking at her husband, "Just as I told



you ! ” and that Roland had answered, “ I should never have believed it. ” That this conversation had given witness the idea that they wanted to sound her or to frighten her.

Then the evidence of Lecocq, aged thirty, a man-servant, was taken. He had often seen the deputies at the Rolands’ house, had waited at meals; the conversation he had overheard had always been discreet and amiable.

Lastly, the evidence of the maid Fleury, aged thirty-four, was taken. She deposed that she had been thirteen years with the Rolands as cook, and that during his tenure of office she had been attached to the house as *fille d’office*. That she was in no position to know with which deputies the Rolands were most intimate, but that many of those already dead and those now in the country were habitually in the house.

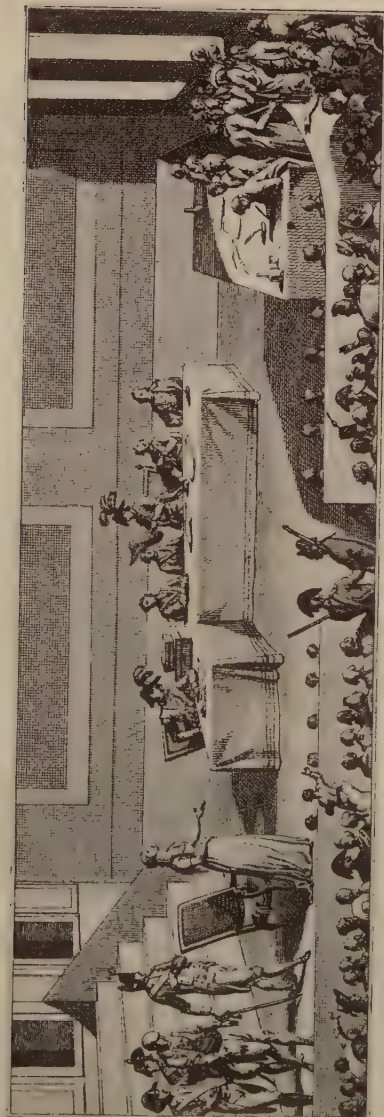
Excellent Mademoiselle Mignot’s evidence was the most damaging, and the pathos of it was that Madame Roland believed blindly in her governess’s fidelity. We know from her last letter to the Canon that she counted on Mademoiselle Mignot to be a second mother to Eudora.

While at the Conciergerie, Madame Roland learnt that it had become necessary to remove Eudora from the care of the Creuzé-Latouche family to whom Bosc had confided her. The crime of harbouring the child of an enemy of the one and indivisible Republic might bring any family to the guillotine, so little Eudora’s name was changed, and she was placed in the house of a Madame Godefroid, a stranger to Madame Roland. One last letter on the child’s behalf was written to this unknown guardian the day before execu-

tion. Manon cannot trust herself to say much; she can only hope that her child may be virtuously brought up, and the last sentence those busy fingers ever wrote in this world were penned to a stranger. “*Mon état produit de fortes affections, il ne comporte pas de longues expressions.*”

In many cases the prisoners at the Conciergerie were judged and executed on the same day. The Girondins, of course, were a notable exception to this custom. When it was intimated to Madame Roland that it was her turn to go before the Tribunal for sentence she at once prepared for death, opened the parcel Sophie had seen her tie up so carefully at Sainte Pélagie containing what she called her *toilette de mort*, and put on the fresh white muslin dress with its black velvet waistband, which she had with some difficulty preserved for this supreme occasion. She was determined to make the offering of her life in a dignified and seemly manner; for in Rome were not the sacrificial victims always garlanded and crowned? Beugnot tells us that on this her last morning her face was pink and white, her lips smiling; with one hand she held up her skirt lest it should trail over the prison floor, the other was clutched at and kissed by the women who crowded round her. She smilingly bade them all have peace, good courage, hope. She did not say she was going to certain death; it was known to all; no one could have borne putting it into words. Blessings and sobs were presently cut short by the voices of two gaolers summoning her to the Tribunal. She walked collectedly up the staircase to the Hall of Liberty, and took the *sellette*, or seat of honour. The judges were Dumas,

Vice-President; Delième, Denizot and Subleyras. Lescot Fleuriot replaced Fouquier-Tinville on this occasion. The jury consisted of thirteen persons of no particular interest. The witnesses were heard first: Mademoiselle Mignot the governess, Guérault of the Bureau of Arts and Crafts, Plaisant, a lawyer living in the same house as Mademoiselle Mignot, and Louis Lecocq, the Rolands' servant. Then Lescot Fleuriot read the official charge preferred against her, of wickedly and designedly participating in a conspiracy against the unity and indivisibility of the Republic, against the liberty and surety of the French people, by collecting at her house the principal leaders of the Federalist conspiracy and carrying on a correspondence with them tending to facilitate their murderous projects. The charge was a mere *résumé* of the two interrogations to which she had been subjected. It must be noted that Fouquier-Tinville in his final report on Madame Roland's case took no heed of Mademoiselle Mignot's depositions; he merely relied on the correspondence of the prisoner with the rebel deputies of Calvados to secure conviction. Her counsel spoke next, and it was not Chauveau Lagarde, as she had forbidden him to come, but a person officially appointed by the Court—Citoyen Guyot, *conseil et défenseur officieux*, who afterwards defended Fleury and Lecocq. Madame Roland spoke next on the lines she had prepared, but was cut short, and told she must not abuse words by using them to praise crime, in other words, to laud Brissot and his confederates. She is stated to have protested impotently against this curtailment of her defence, and the public is said to have shrieked from the



MADAME ROLAND'S LAST WORDS TO HER JUDGES





back of the room: "Long live the Republic! Down with the traitors!" Dumas summed up, and asked the jury the following question, of which there is a record in his own handwriting: <sup>1</sup> "There has been a horrible conspiracy against the unity and indivisibility of the Republic, the liberty and the safety of the French people. Is Marie Jeanne Phlipon, wife of Jean Marie Roland, either author of or accomplice in this conspiracy?" And the answer in the handwriting of the *commis greffier*, that the jury made a declaration in the affirmative, was duly handed to the judge. Thereupon Lescot Fleuriot demanded that the penalty be death. The Tribunal promptly sentenced the prisoner to the guillotine by a law of the 16th of December 1792, a law passed while Roland was in office, and which was levelled against persons who proposed or tried to break up the unity of the Republic or its Government, or to detach parts of it to join to a foreign country.

Madame Roland's goods were confiscated to the Republic by a law of the 10th of March 1793, by which all property belonging to condemned persons was declared the property of the Republic. Directly she had been sentenced, Madame Roland addressed the judges: <sup>2</sup> "You judge me worthy to share the fate of the great men you have assassinated. I shall try to take to the scaffold the same courage they have shown."

Hardly was judgment pronounced than Fouquier-Tinville sent an express letter to Hanriot of the National Guard, informing him that the

<sup>1</sup> *Archives Nationales*, see p. 546.

<sup>2</sup> *Procès fameux jugés avant et pendant la Révolution 1796*. Des Essarts, t. xi. p. 144-5.

execution must take place at 3.30 that afternoon, and that he must provide an escort. He begged Hanriot to note that since it was a question of the wife of an ex-Minister it was to the public interest that the execution should not be delayed but should take place that very afternoon.

As Madame Roland went down the steps from the court to the prison once more, she smiled at her fellow-prisoners, and her humour was so gay and gentle that the felon condemned to suffer with her—an old and trembling forger—actually laughed when lunching with her. We do not know what thoughts raced through her mind in those last hours. She was quiet, smiling and utterly detached from earthly anxiety or care ; it is very curious to think of her so.

It was, after all, a very lonely prospect : Roland away, Buzot away, Eudora away—most of her friends dead, a crowd of strangers to see her off on her last journey.

After luncheon they took her to the women's waiting-room, cut off her brown hair and tied her hands behind her back in the usual way. When she saw La Marche with his shorn head she exclaimed, "It suits you admirably; you have the head of an ancient." Then she stepped out into the Cour du Mai. La Marche was getting into the tumbril in front of her, and she had spirit enough to say, "You are not gallant, La Marche : a Frenchman never should forget what is due to women." Our knowledge of these last moments is gleaned from Sophie Grandchamp, who through her lover Grandpré was well informed of all that happened in the prisons.

The execution was due to take place at 3.30,

and at 2.30 the cortège set out amidst the usual jeers and applause from the loafers outside the prison. Madame Roland was driven in the fourth and last tumbril with La Marche and Sanson, the executioner. The procession followed the accustomed route across the Pont de la Révolution and up the rue Saint Honoré. The winter afternoon closed in rapidly and it was foggy and very chilly for the half-dressed persons jolting along at a foot's pace over the cobblestones.

Madame Grandchamp had spent that Friday morning in meditation over the deaths of Plutarch's heroes, in making herself believe that the fear of death was sheer abjectness, and before going off to her tryst she had screwed herself up to think that those about to die were to be envied; she then went to the steps of the Pont Neuf and clung to the parapet. Her newly acquired stoicism suddenly failed her, for she saw round her numbers of people she knew, and began to wonder what they must think of her; her friendship with Madame Roland was known to all of them—will they not think her a brute, an abandoned wretch? Suddenly there was a cry: "Here she is! Here she is!" Sophie caught sight of the fatal tumbrils, and her strength, her courage, came back as if by magic, at any rate she must not fail the friend she would never serve again. As soon as she could make out Manon's face "her eyes clung to it." Manon was standing; she looked fresh, calm, smiling—no one's testimony varies as to this—it was easy to see that she was trying to revive the poor man crouched on the seat beside her, whose pallor and dejection made so striking a contrast to her own assured bearing and bright colour.

With arms already pinioned she could not wave farewell, but "as she neared the bridge," writes Sophie Grandchamp, "her eyes sought me out, and I read in them the satisfaction she experienced at seeing me at this last, this ineffaceable tryst. When she was abreast of me, a movement of the eyes, accompanied by a smile, showed me that she was glad to have got what she wanted. I waited there for a few minutes, and then when she was far enough away not to be able to see me, exhausted by the efforts I had made, my head went round and round and somehow I found myself at home."

We must follow the tumbril yet a little further than Sophie did and see the end. Sanson, who was driving in the same cart, said afterwards that Madame Roland was the only person who showed perfect naturalness during the whole journey. Many people who died bravely and to all appearances unmoved, broke out in cold sweat, and all swallowed hard during the last hour of life—every mouth was dry save that of Madame Roland, and she was simply gay, natural and unconcerned with the terror of death.

On turning out of the rue Saint Honoré, she saw the guillotine against the sky and the great crowd stretching on all sides round that high and narrow thing. The tumbrils came to a halt beside it, and the prisoners got down and stood in rank. Sanson, list in hand, began to call the names, and the first rows of spectators took off their hats so that none should lose any part of the spectacle. As the victims stood there, they heard the threefold sounds of execution : first the dropping of the plank to which the prisoner was bound, then the fall of the lunette on the neck and then the rattle of the blade. It



was a terrible thing to be the last in an execution, for the blade became blunted and jagged with continual use, and some suffered dreadfully. No one will ever know the horror of the last sight the victims looked upon from the lunette for the seconds before which the blade fell, for that last look was directed into a basket full of heads.

Madame Roland in her final hour was in a state beyond all earthly care, but one kindness it remained for her to do. Seeing La Marche so shivering and abject, she begged the executioner to save him the pain of seeing her die. Sanson hesitated and once more invited her to mount the scaffold; he had his ordered list, and a lady came first in this as in other ceremonies. Smiling at the executioner, she said, "Can you refuse a lady her last request?" He could not, it seemed, and she was allowed her way. When it was her turn a minute later to stand upon that little platform, arms pinioned, body fastened to plank, she did not see the blade dripping with La Marche's blood before her, she did not hear the imprecations of the crowd, her face was alight and unafraid. We do not know her thoughts, but we know what men say she said as she looked away over the heads of the people and her eyes rested on the great clay figure of Liberty set up in that place. Perhaps she thought of the shimmering vision which had beguiled her youth and led her to this pass, perhaps she contrasted it with this earthly idol; we do not know, but with an irony inimitable in our tongue it is said that she exclaimed—and we can see the whimsical smile of the woman who still believed in Liberty as an Ideal Good, and who still despised the cannibal people: "*O Liberté, comme on t'a jouée!*"



## CHAPTER XXI

### THE END OF THE STORY

"Pauvre petit monde plein de larmes et de sourires, de déceptions obstinées et d'espérances plus obstinées encore."—*Impressions et Souvenirs*,  
GEORGE SAND.

IT was a dark Friday afternoon when Madame Roland died. The rain poured pitilessly down, but it did not deter the people of Paris from standing round the scaffold. They missed no detail of the procedure. As the heads fell they noted the official checking off the paper forms on which the deaths were attested, counted the corpses as they were lifted down from the platform, watched the tumbrils being driven away in the gathering gloom of a November afternoon to the cemetery. Sometimes the heads went with the bodies, sometimes in the case of more celebrated victims they were taken to Dr. Curtius' studio at the foot of the guillotine. In this studio the tortured features of the dead were recomposed, the lips were closed, the eyes shut, the horror-struck expression common to all decapitated heads was smoothed away. The faces then were painted with oil, and wax masks taken from the features. Madame Roland's head escaped the notice of the worker in *ciro-plastique*, and was thrown together with her body into the cemetery pit at Ville

l'Evêque. It was covered immediately, as were the other corpses, with lime.

No one of her friends saw Madame Roland die. The last face to greet her on earth was that of Sophie Grandchamp, standing at the corner of the Pont Neuf, bravely smiling that unforgettable farewell. While the miserable interment was being carried out, Madame Roland's friends met at Sophie's house. No one of them could bear to be alone. Soon after Sophie Grandchamp had walked home from her tryst upon the bridge, "Jany" joined her. On seeing him she burst into tears. It was an intense relief to do so, to be merely human after that long heroic wait at the bridge parapet, when she had only managed to sustain herself by imagining that she was one of Plutarch's great men, and that death in itself was a very little thing. "Jany" was crying too, and as they sat together there in the half-dark room, Bosc came suddenly in. He had ventured into Paris from the forest of Montmorency to hear the last accounts of his friend. On looking at the faces of Sophie and "Jany," a fit of uncontrollable sobbing overcame him. His friends feared that he might injure himself, so violent was the manifestation of his grief. In order to try and quiet him, they talked of Manon's old husband away in Rouen. They wondered when he would hear what had happened, and what effect the news of his wife's execution would produce upon him. Would he be seized with remorse at having left her to her fate in Paris? Would he think that she had sacrificed her life for his? Sophie had no doubt that he would commit suicide. They begged Bosc to

write to him at once and tell him as kindly as he could exactly what had happened. The friends sat together till far into the night. There was great comfort in talking together of their wonderful friend, of her courage and her gaiety. The letter written by Bosc was posted the next day, and probably reached Rouen after Roland's death. Instead of waiting for an intimation of his wife's end, on learning that she had been interrogated twice and was to be judged on the 8th, he set to work to sort and burn all the papers in his room, taking care to leave nothing in any drawer or box that might in any way incriminate his kind hostesses, the Demoiselles Malortie. After having done this, he consulted these ladies on the best course of action to be taken. Would it be better that he should go to Paris, make one last speech at the bar of the Assembly, and then perish by the same blade that would kill his wife? The Demoiselles Malortie, who were devoted to him, saw no reason for taking this step, and they pointed out how cruel it would be to his girl Eudora, and reminded him that the possessions of condemned persons were confiscated to the nation, and that in the event of his deciding to do such a thing, Eudora would be ruined. Without saying anything to these ladies about any other intentions, he admitted that they were reasonable in dissuading him from going to the Assembly, and then gravely took leave of them on Monday, the 11th of November. He took no luggage with him, walked quietly out through the streets of the town some three leagues along the Paris road, then, going a short way up the avenue leading

to the Château de Coquetot, he ran the sword which Bosc had given him as a protection against assassins when he was Minister for Home Affairs through his heart. No one knew anything about his death till the next day; but passers-by in the early morning, seeing him sitting with his back against a tree, took him to be sleeping, but on approaching nearer found that he was dead. Deputy Legendre, of the Convention, who was on a mission to Rouen at the time, went out to view the corpse, and found a note in one of the pockets: "Whoever thou art who finds me here, respect my remains. They are those of a man who died as he lived, honest and virtuous. A day will come, indeed it is not far off, when you will meet a terrible judgment; wait for that day. You will then have full knowledge of its cause, and will understand the reason of this warning. May my country in the end abhor her many crimes, and resume humane and social sentiments." After reading this document, Deputy Legendre ordered the body to be buried where it lay.

Buzot heard of Manon's death on Friday, the 15th of November, in his underground hiding-place the Maison Bouquey at Saint Émilion, where he had lain miserably for a month with Louvet, Guadet, Pétion, Barbaroux, Salles and Valady. They were just about to disperse to new retreats when the news came; it produced a dreadful effect upon them all. In Buzot it seemed to crush the man himself, to destroy any hope he might have of living to do something for his country, something to avenge her death. Before leaving Saint Émilion he wrote a note to his friend

Letellier at Evreux, an old friend of Madame Roland's, who had worked with her at the "*Bureau de l'Esprit Publique*" in August 1792, and who was enthusiastic over her writings and her personality. "She is no more—she is no more, my friend. Judge if there be anything now left for me to regret upon this earth. When you hear of my death burn her letters." With this note he enclosed Madame Roland's portrait and five of her letters. "I don't know *why* I want you to keep this portrait for yourself alone . . . you were equally dear to both of us."

This letter of Buzot's, together with his *Mémoires* and those of Pétion and part of Louvet's, were deposited with Madame Bouquey till some opportunity offered for their safe dispatch. Letellier, as it happened, died before Buzot, for he killed himself in prison on the 2nd of June 1794, whereas Buzot led the life of a wild and hunted animal till the following June, when he committed suicide in the open country. The documents consigned to Madame Bouquey's keeping were all seized by the Government when that kind and courageous woman was arrested for harbouring rebels in June 1794.

The fate of Madame Roland's miniature of Buzot was unknown till 1863, when M. Charles Vatel bought it for a franc at the Batignolles Market. It was lying, together with five of Buzot's letters, for sale on the cobblestones alongside of vegetables and other things. Behind it he found the well-known inscription in Madame Roland's writing in which her lover's patriotism and high purpose are described. But for the discovery of these



relics no one would have known the story of the lovers, for up till the time of M. Vatel's find it had always been assumed that Barbaroux, Bosc or Bancal was the secret hero of Madame Roland's heart.

Bosc, whose apartment in Paris had been sealed up since the 14th of September 1793, on which day he had been deprived of his appointment in the Post Office, was at the time of Madame Roland's death living at the Priory of Sainte Radégonde. There he was very openly and diligently occupied in looking after his garden and in describing and painting the spiders of the Forest of Montmorency (of which he discovered more than a hundred varieties), and because of this no one troubled to arrest him. During the last six weeks of his friend's life he ventured into Paris almost every week to the house of the Creuzé-Latouche, to see how Eudora was faring. He proved himself an unchanging, untiring friend, and when after the fall of Robespierre he was able to resume possession of his former apartment in Paris, he constituted himself the child's guardian and tried to secure for her the remnants of her parents' fortune. He also undertook the editing of Madame Roland's *Mémoires* and their publication, "for the benefit of her only girl, deprived of the fortune of father and mother, whose possessions still remain sequestered." Mentelle, who had kept the manuscript entrusted to him safely in his apartment in the Louvre, was only too glad to hand it over to this self-constituted guardian of Eudora's interests, together with a watch and a portrait of Roland given to him by his friend her mother.

The *Mémoires* had "a prodigious success"; 12,000 copies were sold by Louvet immediately they were published. Bosc was so pleased with their success that he also gave his own correspondence with Madame Roland to the world. Unfortunately, later on, when his ward was about fifteen, he developed a *tendresse* for her and thought that she reciprocated his feelings. However, on delaying his declaration in order to make quite sure of this, he found she was "alienated from him," that she no longer liked being with him, so he packed her off to the Malorties at Rouen and made Champagneux her guardian.<sup>1</sup> Eventually—that is, in 1796, three years after her mother's death—Eudora married Champagneux's son, and we have one little further glimpse of her in 1799 in Bosc's *Memoirs*, "when she was greatly disfigured by the small-pox and by two confinements," and created on him a really painful impression. They then ceased for many years to have any communication with each other, and it was not till 1822 that they became reconciled.

The maid Fleury and the valet Lecocq, who were arrested<sup>2</sup> for showing sorrow and indignation over their mistress's death, were not tried till the 7th of June 1794, and then Lecocq was condemned and Fleury acquitted. Grief for her mistress's death and seven months of gaol had driven her for the time being demented. She was dismissed from the Tribunal as mad. Soon after she was acquitted the Convention decreed her by some strange freak of justice 800 francs indemnity for eight

<sup>1</sup> Champagneux was released from prison August 1794.

<sup>2</sup> November 27.

months' detention. She then joined Eudora, whom she accompanied with her guardian Bosc to Beaujolais, Villefranche and Clos.<sup>1</sup> Later she went to Rouen with her, and remained in her service after her marriage. Time never assuaged Fleury's grief, and she lived on at Clos for many years, ending her life in the pension of a convent at an advanced old age.

Though quite a number of Madame Roland's intimate friends escaped the scaffold, Bancal, Bosc, Champagneux, Lanthénas, for example, all her political allies, all her more important acquaintances, died violently. She was thirty-nine when she was executed, and had by then lost nearly all the people she had known and worked with.

Life towards the end was an overwhelming disappointment—she could not regret quitting it. The new day had never dawned with the splendour she had anticipated; in fact, the sun of that day seemed to be sinking into a blood-red bed before it had poured its lively warmth into the shivering watchers and workers who had heralded its dawn.

Madame Roland's career was an apparent failure, as indeed have so many of the careers been on which human interest has been most permanently fixed. She had set out on life's campaign with great independence of character, a high sense of duty and determination, a burning wish to leave the world better than she found it, an ambition for power which was not so much a personal vanity as a desire for a lever on the world to change its social conditions. She wanted

<sup>1</sup> July, October 1795.

to do something for her fellow-men, and she felt she could do something if only she were highly placed towards furthering the mysterious ends towards which humanity is moving. She was of the band of reformers, pioneers, disturbers of the existing state of things. She lived greatly, she wore her heart out striving after unattainable things, she sought no cheap success but wrecked herself on society itself, and in the end drank the solitary cup of heroism to its dregs. Her will remained unshaken to the last, and if we remember that nearly all the education we get from others is moral, not intellectual, we may learn something from her. She always tried to apply her knowledge, her reading, to life; culture in the sense of fruitless knowledge was abhorrent to her. She tried to make ideas live, to give the principles she had imbibed from Rousseau, Tacitus, Delolme, a body, and by means of her own education to shape other people's interests and aims. Thirty-six years of life were devoted to preparation; three years to action.

At the end she could say with another idealist, "I have looked at the world for a long time through a magic-lantern; the glass of it has broken."

# BIBLIOGRAPHY

## MANUSCRIPTS OF MADAME ROLAND'S "MÉMOIRES"

### *In the Bibliothèque Nationale*

These consist of:

1. 370 sheets (740 pages), MS. fr. 13736, acquired in 1856.
2. 13 sheets, MS. fr. 4697, acquired in 1892.

Manuscript 13736 consists of 35 *cahiers*. The paper is rough, and the shape of ordinary children's copy-books. The writing is flowing, and she had no time to make corrections.

Manuscript 4697 consists of *cahiers* which Bosc did not think worth including in his original edition of Madame Roland's *Mémoires*, and which he gave to M. Barrière; but before doing so he made a few extracts from them which he inserted in his own handwriting in various places in MS. 13736.

Both these manuscripts were written during August, September and October 1793.

Champagneux's edition of the *Mémoires* came out in 1800. They contained *Opuscules* and *Voyages* and a few letters, as well as the actual *Prison Memoirs*.

The Manuscripts were apparently given by Bosc to Eudora Roland in 1796 or 1798, then lent by her to her father-in-law, Champagneux, for his edition of her mother's memoirs. Then on his death in 1807 they were preserved by his eldest son, Benoît-Anselme, and on his death in 1844 they were once more in Eudora's keeping. At her death in 1858 they were by a will made in 1846 bequeathed to the *Bibliothèque Impériale*. Madame Eudora Champagneux, who was very dense and uninteresting, never seemed to be aware of the existence of the 198 letters of her mother, the 168 letters of her father, and the other documents which are to-day in the *Bibliothèque Nationale* (Papiers Roland MS. N. and fr. 6238-6244). M. Claude Perroud thinks it probable that when Benoît-Anselme died, Pierre-Léon (Eudora's husband) preserved the letters, never telling his wife about them. They were known to their children in 1864.



## OFFICIAL LETTERS, CIRCULARS, ETC.,

*Written by Roland or his Wife*

- Mémoire sur les services de Roland (written by both together).  
 Circulaire aux Corps administratifs (explaining the Revolution of August 10). August 23.  
 Compte rendu à l'Assemblée Nationale. August 21.  
 Proclamation du Conseil Exécutif provisoire. August 25.  
 Lettre écrite par le Ministre de l'Intérieur à plusieurs départements frontières. August 29.  
 Ministre de l'Intérieur aux Corps administratifs (exhortation to enlist to repel invasion.)  
 Circulaire (accompanying documents found in the Tuileries). September 1.  
 Lettre de Roland au Président de la Convention (offering resignation and complaining of prison massacres and personal attack).  
 Lettre de Roland à Santerre (ordering massacres to be stopped). September 4.  
 Aux habitants des campagnes (to organise defence and prevent corn getting into enemy hands).  
 Proclamation (recommending stores of corn should be moved to the interior of the country). September 10.  
 Letter (apology for conduct). September 13.  
 Lettre au Directoire de Dép<sup>t</sup> de la Loire Inf. September 11, 1792.  
 Lettre à l'Assemblée et au Maire de Paris (on brigandage in city). September 14, 1792.  
 Lettre à l'Assemblée (on arbitrary arrests in Paris without charge specified). September 17, 1792.  
 Another letter on same theme. December 14, 1792.  
 Lettre à l'Assemblée (dilapidations to public property). September 17, 1792.  
 Circulaire aux Corps administratifs (announcing Convention and suggesting the proclamation of the Republic).  
 Rapport à la Convention. September 23.  
 Lettre à l'Assemblée (announcing his election as Deputy and indicating Pache as his successor). September 24.  
 Avis au Public (forbidding public the Tuileries while it was being allowed to house the Convention).  
 Lettre à l'Assemblée Législative (denouncing Commune who were about to send Commissaries to departments).

- Circulaire aux départements (warning them against Paris Commissaries, and giving instructions and commissions to agents of Executive).
- Lettres aux Corps administratifs (the preceding letter having produced no effect, it was followed by this, announcing suppression of agents of Executive Power).
- Aux Corps administratifs (on subsistence).
- A un citoyen de Tours (same subject).
- A la Convention (same subject).
- A la Convention (on new agricultural and commercial measures).
- Troubles relatifs aux subsistances.
- Circulaire aux Ingénieurs (on development of agricultural and industrial resources of the country).
- Circulaire du Ministre aux Corps administratifs (on establishing agricultural schools, bureaux and papers).
- Circulaire aux Administrateurs des Dep<sup>ts</sup> (on the maintenance of roads).
- Aux Mêmes (on the destruction and dilapidation of public property).
- Lettre à la Convention (on commerce).
- Lettre au peintre David (granting him lodgment in the Louvre).
- Lettre au Président de la Convention (recommending the destruction of castles).
- Compte Moral du Ministre de l'Intérieur.
- Circulaire (announcing that he will remain in office). September 30.
- Article du *Moniteur* (against abuse of term "citoyen"). October 15.
- Rapport sur la situation de Paris. October 29.
- Aux Pasteurs des villes et des campagnes.
- Le Conseil Exécutif provisoire au Prince Evêque de Rome. November 23.
- Article du *Moniteur* (in self-defence). December 7.
- Aux Corps administratifs (circular for newly elected departmental authorities on their powers and duties). December 22.
- Note du Ministre de l'Intérieur à ses concitoyens. December 17.
- Aux Corps administratif (disclaiming any connection with a recently distributed pamphlet from London). December 17.
- Lettre aux clubs (requesting patriotic gifts for armies). January 4.
- Lettre au Président de la Convention (explaining refusal to sign report on administration in conjunction with his colleague). January 6.
- Extrait du Compte rendu. January 6.

- Circulaire (recommending economy in the use of paper).  
 Billet de Roland (denying rumours of escape and demanding inquiry). January 21.  
 Aux Maires et officiers municipales de Paris. January 21.  
 Au Président de la Convention (explaining refusal to sign accounts presented by colleagues). January 22.  
 Aux Corps administratifs, aux sociétés populaires à tous les citoyens (inviting Nation to witness in his favour). January 22.  
 Ni Marat ni Roland.—CLOOTS. 1792.  
 Correspondance avec Lafayette.—ROLAND. 1792.  
 Rapport.—BRIVAL.  
 Rapport.—COLLOT D'HERBOIS.  
 Lettres d'Italie.—ROLAND.  
 Mon Mot aux Gens de Biens.—CLOOTS. 1792.  
 Lettres à M. Roland.—CHAMPY. 1792.  
 Histoire des Brissotins.—CAMILLE DESMOULINS.  
 And many other contemporary pamphlets, newspapers, posters, etc.

\* \* It is with a deep sense of admiration that I acknowledge my debt to M. CLAUDE PERROUD, the matchless editor of Madame Roland's Letters and Memoirs. The footnotes and appendices with which he has adorned and amplified her works make his volumes a mine of erudition and information. It would have been impossible to write this book except the way had been already prepared by this distinguished man of letters.

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- Mémoires inédits de Pétion, Buzot et Barbaroux.—Introduction par C. A. DAUBAN. 1866.
- Letters written in France.—H. M. WILLIAMS.
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- Tableau de Paris.—MERCIER.
- La femme au XVIII<sup>ème</sup> siècle.—E. and J. de GONCOURT.
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- Protestation contre le livre intitule l'Histoire des Girondins, etc. —J. GUADET. 1860.
- La Légende des Girondins.—E. BIRÉ. 1881.
- Les Ministres de la République Française.—GIRARDOT. 1860.
- And many more volumes of less immediate relevance.

## COPY OF WARRANT OF ARREST

Transferring Madame ROLAND from *Sainte Pélagie* to  
the *Conciergerie*.

ACCUSATEUR PUBLIC

### Mandat d'Arrêt

Contre la nommée Phelipon, femme du nommé Roland, ci-devant ministre de l'Intérieur.

Prévenue de conspiration contre l'unité  
et l'indivisibilité de la République et  
d'avoir cherché à introduire la guerre  
civile.

### Conciergerie.

Apporté le 11<sup>me</sup> jour de brumaire de l'an second de la République.

## COPY OF THE QUESTION ADDRESSED TO THE JURY AT THE TRIAL

### QUESTION

*In Dumas'*  
*handwriting*

{ Il a existé une conspiration horrible contre l'unité,  
l'indivisibilité de la République, la liberté et  
la sûreté du peuple français. Marie - Jeanne  
Phlippon, femme de Jean-Marie Roland, est-elle  
auteur ou complice de cette conspiration ?

DUMAS.

*In Wolff's*  
*handwriting*

{ La déclaration du juré est affirmative sur les  
questions ci-dessus. Ce 18 brumaire, l'an 2<sup>me</sup> de  
la République française.

DUMAS.

WOLFF

C<sup>is</sup> greffier



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